

How To Be Human: Friction

*A sermon preached on Matthew 10:24-39 on Sunday, June 21, 2026,
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I.

As the story goes, a photographer was taking pictures of first graders at an elementary school. You know those school photos that show up in yearbooks and in frames snaking up stairway walls! A few of the kids seemed a bit nervous, so he was making small talk to put his subjects at ease. “What are you going to be when you grow up?” he asked one little girl. She paused, thinking of all the adults in her life – her parents and grandparents, teachers and neighbors, coaches and guides. And without skipping a beat, she said “I’m going to be tired!”¹

II.

Oh how we can relate, right? Adulting is hard and exhausting, isn’t it? Remembering the doctor’s appointments, and doing the laundry, and getting the work done, and moving our bodies, and making sure we bought the Father’s Day cards (*Emily, making sure you bought the father’s day cards!*), and booking the tickets, and paying the bills, and stressing out about money, and keeping up with the family and the friends, and and figuring out what to cook for every. Single. Meal. Every. Single. Day. For all the days!

These are just the logistics. In these adulting years, we come up against broader knowledge of happenings in the world, which increases our despair and our fear with every slashed federal budget or violent act in a school. We worry about what we know and what we don’t, what’s lurking under the skin

¹ J. R. Love,
<https://thepastorsworkshop.com/sermon-illustrations/j-r-love-what-are-you-going-to-be-when-you-grow-i-d-2463>

and behind the walls and within relationships gone cold. We get lonely, and get frustrated with our aging bodies, and get new jobs, and get cancer, and then get new things to worry about. We labor, and we toil, and we endure one global crisis after another. It's a wonder we're not all out here collapsing under the weight of it all.

So when companies come along with the promise of ease, we'd be foolish not to buy what they're selling, given what all we're carrying! The Roomba that glides seamlessly around your floors and vacuums them for you! Plugs that just turn on the lamps with the clap of the hands, a click of a button, or the command of a voice. An app where you can find just about any item your heart desires, and with the low price of \$139 a year, you can have it in your hands overnight!

This is what Facebook founder, Mark Zuckerberg, calls the "frictionless existence." That's the goal, you see – from him and all the other tech bros out here automating our writing, reading, mopping, sending. Because friction, you remember from science class, is the force that resists motion – whether it be two objects rubbing together, or two points of view coming into conflict, or two people with "mutual irritation."²³ Friction is the endless to do list with multiple overlapping priorities. Friction is the political fight with your Uncle Joe that always seems to simmer under the surface at Thanksgiving. Friction are the needs that mount even as capacity wears away.

Just think about all the ways we're coaxed into choices away from friction. Facebook tells me I can have friends that I haven't spoken to in decades, "friends" I've literally never even met. Politicians tell me that they'll

² <https://www.britannica.com/science/friction>

³ <https://www.etymonline.com/word/friction>

give us more money and kick out all the people we don't like. Gauzy commercials invite me to "come visit California" and to "talk to your doctor about this new medicine!," with the implication that both will make my life better. Inventors give us the apps and automatic bill pay and artificial intelligence. Even some churches have created a one-stop shop of their church house for your life, building a coffee shop right next to the Sanctuary and a school for your kids just next door so that even your church becomes a place of ease and comfort! Each conveys a fix to the ills you carry, hope for your particular places of despair or exhaustion. So why would we *not* choose these frictionless ways of living? Why not live a life of ease?

III.

"Go empty-handed," Jesus says to the disciples sent out to do God's work of love in the world. "No money or clothes or food or anything that could provide material comfort, for all of this will be found through reliance on God and the hospitality of others. I'm sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves," Jesus told them. Sounds... downright cozy, doesn't it?

As he continues, the circumstances get even more dire. "I have not come to bring peace but a sword," says the prince of peace. "I'll set family against itself – child against parent, parent against child. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." (*Happy Father's Day!*) "So take up your cross and follow me. Those who find their life will lose it," (*how many of us are out here, trying to find ourselves?*) "... and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."

Can you imagine a more *friction-filled life* than this one Jesus describes?

Work without any comforts of home. Likely conflict. Lost life. A suggestion to hate your family *in Jesus's name*. Even when we get into the

nuances of translation and understand this particular command more as “detaching from” instead of “hating,” still! If Jesus is trying to woo people into discipleship, he’s seriously missing the point. Might we suggest something automated instead? Maybe just a *little* easier at least?

But this life of discipleship that Jesus describes is not for the faint of heart. Intense, unconventional, and wholly human, the life of discipleship is a life of relinquishing, giving up, and reprioritizing, a life of sure conflict and turmoil, of surrendering what we love in order to move toward the “who” behind all love.⁴ It’s a life that led Bonhoeffer to his death and the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement to the police dogs. It’s a life that leads ordinary humans into extraordinary faithfulness. It is a life of chosen friction, you might say. For as one person says, “you can’t carry a cross if your arms are already full.”⁵

IV.

Pastor and author Mark Yaconelli tells a sobering story about a call he once got from a Christian woman. Deeply distressed after talking with her college-age son, the woman told Mark about how her son had decided to leave his studies to join a group of Americans going to Iraq to be with Iraqi civilians during the bombing and occupation. Their goal was twofold – to work in a children’s hospital, but to do so as a visible presence of American citizens in an Iraqi space. They hoped this would add extra layers of protection to the lives of the Iraqi civilians, as well as increase awareness about the suffering of those civilians back home.

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<https://www.saltproject.org/progressive-christian-blog/2020/6/17/what-troubles-you-salts-lectionary-commentary-for-third-week-after-pentecost>

⁵ Rocky Supinger, <https://www.fourthchurch.org/sermons/2025/090725RS.html>

Hearing all of this, the mother was upset, and told her son in no uncertain terms that he had made a commitment to college, and she was paying for it, and this was no time to engage in radical politics, and he'd better get back to school. Pastor Mark on the other end of the phone asked her how her son responded. She sighed, and the conversation got quiet.

With a lump in her throat that unfolded into a sob, she recalled how her son had said, "but mom, this isn't politics. This is about following Jesus! We're going as a Christian group. Didn't you and the church teach me that Jesus was always befriending people who were weak and suffering?"

Pastor Mark waited while she cried. Then with a hint of resignation in her voice, finally the mother said, "He's right, you know. I know he's right. But if I knew he was going to do something like this I would have taken him out of the church and put him in Boy Scouts instead."⁶

V.

No offense to any Boy Scouts in the room. But isn't that what we are called to be and do as the church? To be the people that, when nothing else matters, our love for God and neighbor spills in faithful action for the world. To be the people that lay the firm foundation upon which this world can be built. To be the people that lean into the friction, because we know it keeps us human and makes us faithful. To be the people that reject a Roomba-shaped faith and choose the maddening, hopeful, hard, thrilling way of love because it is the way of life, every single time.

But we can't do that on our own strength. It looks rather hard! No matter how relentless we are, we'd be like that first grade girl who surveyed

⁶ As told by Jakob Topper in his sermon "Go Your Own Way" preached at Wilshire Baptist Church on September 4, 2016. It can be found here: https://www.wilshirebc.org/download_file/view/3788/.

the scene and decided it makes her tired just thinking about it. And we can't do this on our own strength, but our own courage too, because disconnected from its source, it will surely fail every time.

To all his disciples, then and now, Jesus says "do not be afraid." Even as I send you as sheep to the wolves, even as you must be wise as serpents and innocent as doves, remember the sparrow. For the God who counts every hair on our heads is the God who says "come to me, you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." That's the God who will never leave us, no matter the tension and the conflict and the hardships and the friction of our lives, because that is the God who took up the full weight of the cross for the sake of the world.

How do we know?

End with singing "His Eye Is On the Sparrow"