

Relationships: Transactional, Contractual, or Covenantal (May 21, 2026)

On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus “took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, ‘This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many.’” (Mark 14:23-24) Jesus was making a significant sacrifice to establish a meaningful relationship. He was committing to a covenant.

There are various ways that people can relate with one another. These differing relationships have different conditions, and they produce different outcomes. We will compare three of the myriad ways that people relate with one another.

First, there is the transactional relationship. This is an interaction centered on a single transaction. An exchange is made: each person gives something and each person gets something. This relationship is very impersonal: who the people are matters less than the deal that is made. In fact, we might even do the deal without ever meeting another person. In this case, the trade is all that really matters.

Next, there is the contractual relationship. This relationship extends beyond a single transaction to an agreement for on-going transactions. This relationship requires a contract; the contract may be written, signed, and notarized or it may simply be implied. The essence of the contract is that one person will meet their terms and conditions as long as the other person meets their terms and conditions. This relationship is inherently conditional, and it is largely impersonal. All that matters in this relationship is that each person is doing what they promised.

Finally, there are covenantal relationships. These relationships differ from all others in that they are focused on the people involved and not primarily on the work each person is expected to do. Within a covenant, there is a performance agreement both parties are expected to uphold. But there is also a deeper commitment to the relationship that allows for repair and reconciliation when the agreement is broken. In a covenantal relationship, an unconditional commitment to the other person is of highest priority. The people and how they relate are what really matters.

If your friends are “deal friends,” your relationships are transactional or contractual.

If your friends are “real friends,” you are in a covenant.

Jesus is a REAL friend!