

How to Be A *really* Good Friend ... To *a few* People  
 Pastor Terry Foester  
 9/17/2023, Brandywine Valley Church

// Introduction //

*“Two Weeks on Friendship” — as our charge to be connected.  
 Last Week: Friends form us, reveal our blind spots and care for us when life falls apart. You were also invited to enter into a friendship with Jesus - as your Lord & Savior.*

Today...we'll lean into the *nitty gritty* of *HOW TO BE A GOOD FRIEND*

Regardless of your age, social status, circumstances, your gifts...each one of you has a relationship step to take.

If friends form us, reveal our blind spots, and care for us when life falls apart. Then friendship is not only essential...It's powerful.

### *There's Power in Friendship*

Friendship does something a self-help book can't do.  
 It does something that a Master Class can't teach you.  
 Friendship is not a subscription you pay for...it's something that shows up on your doorstep...even when you'd prefer it to stay away.

- > What are you looking for in a friend?
- > What do you value most in your friendships from the past?
- > How do you make really close friends?

In Jesus's own life, we see the power of friendship come alive.  
 Jesus didn't see friendship as a second order "nice to have" or "convenient feature" of his life. For Jesus — FRIENDSHIP BUILDING WAS THE CENTERPIECE OF HIS DAILY LIFE and the essential core activity of his discipleship strategy.

Toward the end of his ministry...in one of the most intimate encounters in John 15 - Jesus redefines their relationship around friendship.

---

// Scripture Reading //

Jesus is speaking to his disciples in His final farewell discourse...shares a beautiful picture to describe how closely related they now are to Him and His Father. That the Father is gardener, Jesus is the Vine, and his disciples are called to remain or abide in him, as Jesus remains and abides in them. He reminds them that apart from Him, they can't do anything of lasting value or worth.

We'll pick up the passage in verse 9:

9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. 17 This is my command: Love each other.

---

// Exposition //

Jesus is on a mission to save the world...and he still has time to have really close friends!

The God of the Universe enters in to our mess, our brokenness. He lives in our world in both the frustrations and the challenges of it...and he doesn't do it in isolation. He seeks out meaningful friendships that end up being life changing...he models friendship for us in a way that give us a picture of the intersection of friendship and mission.

Jesus never compromised his mission, yet he had time, space and capacity to be with one, or three, or twelve individuals and take time with them...to explain a parable in a deeper way...or to defend when the disciples were accused of breaking the sabbath...or to challenge them to say, "who do you really believe that I am?"... to take them with him on special trips...up

on the mountain at his Transfiguration, or when he retreated into the garden...his closest friends were with him through it all.

Even today, for us in this moment — there's always a friend in the person of Jesus. Friendship with Jesus is real yet mysterious. He can go on a walk with you later today, while you may not see his physical presence...his Spirit is there.

Jesus is fiercely intentional  
A friend of the deepest sort

A friend that seeks you still  
If you don't have any friends and you feel sort of lost and lonely...Jesus still offers that friendship  
What a friend we have in Jesus!  
All of our sin, all of our grief...he can bear it.  
He asks us to bring him everything...  
And in exchange...he promises us peace

No matter what trial, no matter what temptation you're facing  
Regardless of the trouble you're in...no matter how alone you feel  
Don't be discouraged!  
Go to Jesus  
You will not find a friend as faithful as Jesus  
Someone who shares all your sorrow  
Who is acquainted with your grief and understands your weakness  
And it's through prayer that this friendship with Jesus is stewarded.

Jesus provided life-on-life friendship. And not only is he still a friend like that to us...he is our example as we extend friendship to others.

Friendship in our culture isn't easy. Maybe that's why Jesus came before the car was invented...we need to be creative on how we find time to fit friendship into our lives.

Jesus kept friendship practical in his life. If friendship is for forming us, calling out our blind spots, and being there for someone when life falls

apart...we need to arrange our lives in a way that this kind of friendship can actually happen!

How do we apply Jesus's style of friendship?

### (1) SPARK JOY IN YOUR FRIENDSHIPS

Friendship is not a DRUDGERY, it's a JOY  
Drudgery means "menial hard work". Friendship is definitely hard, but it's not MENIAL.

For Jesus, Joy was something exchanged in the context of friendship. "Joy is a determination to let whatever takes place bring us one step closer to the God of life." (Henri Nouwen, From the Road to Daybreak)

Joy exists in the midst of sorrow or hardship. This repurposes the hardship of friendship. Friendship is a means to bring joy into someone's life. And in the case of Jesus, he brings a completion to their joy.

But how? Jesus shared his every-day-life with his disciples. In the midst of everyday life, there is joy in friendship to be discovered. Sometimes...a simple walk is all it takes to bring joy back into a friendship.

### (2) SACRIFICE FOR YOUR FRIENDSHIPS

Deep friendship requires sacrifice — and that is the norm, not the exception.

Jesus says one of the most jolting and comprehensive statements about love: He says, there is "no greater love than this... to lay down your life for your friend."

Jesus shares his burden, his sorrow with this disciples...he shares His Fathers mission...and ultimate he makes the greatest sacrifice for his friends, by giving his own life.

One of the most surprising discoveries for me in preparing this sermon — is that for Jesus - friendship is the heart of Disciple making.

At the heart of Christian friendship is doing hard things, not out of obligation, but out of love. It's a way we help carry one another burdens.

Illustration: Jerry Seinfeld has a show called COMEDIANS IN CARS GETTING COFFEE - In season on he sits down with Michael Richards who plays his next-door neighbor Kramer, and at one point they get really serious about something that happened to Michael Richards in real life... he had a really dark moment as a stand-up comedian and reacted poorly:

*Richards:* "I busted up after that event seven years ago. It broke me down.  
It's just one of those nights. And thanks for sticking by me."

*Seinfeld:* "There was no issue with that."

*Richards:* "Well, it meant a lot to me. But inside it still kicks me around a bit."

*Seinfeld:* "Okay, well that's-- You know--That's up to you...to say, you know, 'I've been carrying this bag enough. I'm gonna put it down.'"

*Richards:* Yeah. Yeah.

*Seinfeld:* Well, I hope that you do consider using your instrument again...because it's the most beautiful instrument I've ever seen.

*Richards:* "Jerry. Thanks, buddy."

That's what a friend does:

Gal 6:2 "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

### **(3) FIND YOUR FRIENDS AND STICK WITH THEM**

How did Jesus choose his friends?

At some level...he seems to come across them (they are doing their job — fishing nearby, or collecting taxes along)...they cross his path. This may be the mixture of everyday life and God's sovereignty working itself out.

He didn't choose them on merit.

Choosing your friends is not like picking sides on a basketball team...it's more about a decision of will. "Looking at someone, and saying — I want you to be a really close friend."

FINDING FRIENDS is an ACTION STEP not based on the merit of what a person can offer, but on a decision to be their friend no matter what. And it needs to be mutual and reciprocated.

Our cultural setting doesn't make friendship easy. But it's desperately needed, more than any other time in history — the need for close friendships is at an all-time high.

In the book Tribes, Sebastian Junger unpacks our hard wiring for friendship and belonging. The book is not a Christian Based approach to rebuilding community, but I agree with his assessment of loneliness:

"First agriculture, and then industry, changes two fundamental things about the human experience. The accumulation of personal property allowed people to make more and more individualistic choices about their lives...and those choices unavoidably diminished group efforts toward a common good. And as society modernized, people found themselves able to live independently from any communal group.

"A person living in a modern city or suburb can, for the first time in history, go through an entire day – or an entire life – mostly encountering complete strangers. They can be surrounded by others and yet feel deeply, dangerously alone."

This is why we need a "small groups ministry"; to fit community back into our lives.

The practice of Christ-Centered friendship runs against the grain of our culture. Here's how to be a really good friend to a few people:

---

// Application //

As we shift into application;

Rather than trying to focus on your 50 friends... begin be seeking a close knit friendship with 3-12 people. Jesus had 72 disciples and probably lots of friends that were important to him. But even Jesus wasn't equally close to

everyone. If he hadn't revealed himself to the 12...we may not have the church like we do today.

You also might have 72 friends in this room. Those friendships are real and important, and the fact that we know each other well makes this church what it is. But if you are equally close to 72 people...you run the risk of remaining just far enough from anyone that you'll slip through the cracks when you begin to struggle.

Be like Jesus in this way. There is a picture of healthy friendship sitting within the life of Jesus.

Where to begin...

**(1) Who do you know best? Who knows you best?**

- Who are you most vulnerable with?
- Who are you most comfortable with?
- Who knows your secrets; your flaws, yet still accepts you?

**(2) Evaluate your Own Character as a Friend:**

- Are you Reliable?
- Are you Trustworthy?
- Do you know how to Empathize?
- Are you able to ask good questions, hard questions?
- Are you Available?
- Are you easy to be with, or are you a lot of work to be with?
- Are you able to insert yourself into someone's life in a way that is well received?

**(3) Use Hospitality as an inroad to Friendship:**

There's a couple in church, who will remain nameless...but I love their household theme... *"We doze but we never close"*

I know another guy at church, who will also go nameless...that has been known to, while baking cookies...go ask a neighbor for an egg...and then in turn...later on... return to said neighbor with a plate of cookies — and remind them that their generosity played a

role — and he shares the cookies with them. This is what I call hospitable brilliance

**(4) Spend more time listening than speaking**

One of the ways to grow is by becoming a good listener. To Listen for understanding

**(5) Make a plan to Go Deeper:**

- Begin a bible reading plan together
- (Example - 3 guys that play golf together that also read a daily devotion together)
- Begin a new hobby together
- Start a new small group with a few people you already know
- Have a conversation with your current small group about how you can make friendship a priority within your group
- If you see someone who looks like they could use a friend, take a practical step to initiate that friendship

---

// Conclusion //

I want to encourage you to take a next relational step.

Today, after each of the services we will host our annual Connect Fair. The purpose of this Fair is to connect those who attend Brandywine Valley with one of our Small Groups. At the Connect Fair you will be able to talk with Small Group leaders about what groups are offered this fall.

Currently, we have five 5 women's group, 6 men's groups, 13 small groups and 18 support groups available that meet on different days and times throughout the week.

A new small group called *Front Porch* will launch for the fall semester. Not everyone has a front porch. But most people have places where friends, family, and even strangers gather for conversation and new friendships. Front Porch is the first step to joining a small group. Front Porch is a twice



per month gathering that begins on October 3rd here at church. Each session includes a time of worship, prayer and small group Bible study.



*What is your next relationship step?*

To Help Facilitate Your Next Relational Step...we have a *Response Card*. I'm looking for 100% participation on this one...to evaluate where you are, and how we can help...during the instrumental time...please fill out this card. For those online you can find the same response card using the QR code.