Video

Love and friendship sure was less complicated when we were kids, amen?!

How many of you can even remember fighting with your friends?

Then when the ice comes off your lip, your right back over there, knocking on their door, saying “what are we going to do this weekend?”

Let’s go ride bikes or hang out at Woolworth’s

What happened? We grew up?

Maybe you have a friend or relative who has said or done something that hurt you… so you’ve “cut them off”, “written them off” or “unfriended” them…

The Lord offer’s His people a better way of growing… Spiritual growth… Living with an eternal perspective.

Jesus was in the upper room with His disciples sharing a final meal with them.

And rather than “unfriend” Judas or “exclude” Peter, who He knew had already betrayed Him and was going to deny Him…

Jesus demonstrates where His head was…

He knew where He was going… He knew that He would be reunited with His Father in Paradise after His Resurrection, so why not leave an AMAZING example of love, thankfulness, humility & service and wash their feet…

Why not give a visual example thru the Lord’s Supper, of how much His love for them would cost…

He also offered them words of love, comfort and reassurance that He would come back for them.

He promised them they would have all the “help” they would need to bear fruit for the Kingdom and accomplish the redemptive mission they where saved for… while He was away.

Thru the good times and bad times… They were His “Forever Friends”…

As His conversation continued, Jesus had a lot to say to them (and us) about “Forever Friendship”.

John 15:12-15

Before we begin to accept people as friends, it’s important to accept His concept of friendship. V9, 12

The roots of Forever Friendship are rooted in the Trinity (God Head)… because we are created in THEIR image… which has been marred because of disobedience to God…

V11

Jesus says His joy… as well as our joy… are maximized when we realize...

1. We are made for friendship. Genesis 2:18,24

Men… God has wired us to seek out our Eve (not Steve), to leave mom & dad, and cleave (be joined) together in lifelong commitment (shown thru the wedding ceremony)!

Yes, our spouse/family is one of the main ways our need for friendship can and should be fulfilled…, but it’s not enough…

And we can see Jesus’ commandment in V12 to seek more friendships, because we are “told to”…

Or better yet, if we understood what Jesus is saying as the medicine that we need to heal and transform us back into His image…

We would like experience the natural by-product of God’s love which is an increase in the quality & quantity of our relationships…

As we follow Jesus’ pattern of love and friendship… living with an eternal perspective… (and therefore CONTINUING TO LOVE even those who hurt us) More people might want to be friends with us…

What does “Forever” Christian friendship look like?

A mutual relationship (not one way) of sacrificial love… trust/acceptance and concern/forgiveness.

Forever friends are the folks that you let into your “inner circle”…

The friendship between David & Jonathon are a good example of this in the Scriptures. 1 Samuel 18:1

Dee and I were blessed this week during our morning devotions from Colossians 4 – Where Paul wrote about his “forever friends”…

co-workers in Christ... He also mentioned 33 of them by name in Romans 16.

Does God want you to increase our friendships? Yes, but He also cautions you to…

1. Choose your friends wisely.

The basis of our friendship for each other is not V10/14…

That only applies to Christ’s love for the Father and our love for Jesus…

But it does establish a good boundary and helps us to understand who the candidates for our “inner circle” might be.

It’s unwise to bring someone into your life without knowing (thru how they live) that they are friends of Christ…

In 1 Corinthians 15:33 Paul wrote to full-grown believers (not his teens class) when he warned… “Do not be deceived… Bad company corrupts good character.”

The kinds of people you allow into your “inner circle”, are the kind of people you will you become.

What do you mean pastor, I thought Christianity was about loving everyone?!

Be loving/friendly toward everyone (including your enemies), for the purpose of leading them to Christ, yes…

but be very selective about who you let into your inner circle…

Proverbs 13:20

Colossians 3:16

Teach in all wisdom = lead others to increased Sanctification.

Surround yourselves with “like minded” people… who desire to set more of themselves apart to the Lord and His work.

That’s how Iron sharpens iron…

Admonish in all wisdom = sternly or sharply be able to correct people when their doing the wrong and getting off the path.

(Only after you’re sure they’re actually doing wrong first, don’t listen to others… only getting one side of the story… that would be foolish and will probably blow up in your face…)

The right kind of friends don’t just “cheer you on” to do the right thing, they also love you enough to “correct” you (in love).

Which is sometimes where people “check out” of relationships, because “they feel offended” or “judged”. Stop that… it’s not healthy!

If you don’t have friends or a pastor that is trying to help you like that… you’ve got another problem… found in Proverbs 27:6…

Enemies kiss up to you… they’ll focus on telling you what you want to hear… so they can use you and get whatever it is they want from you…

Friends who shoot straight with you because it’s in your best interest… (even though it may feel like you’re being wounded)…

We can’t have enough of those people in our inner circle…

Otherwise all you’ll have is users and suck ups…

But as soon as you take away whatever it is they want… BYE BYE!!

So let the people in, who are trying to help you get your life on track… don’t keep them at arms length! You need more of them!

Choose your friends wisely… Amen!

V15 is really the core of what the Lord wants us to understand…

The difference between some people in your life and “Forever Friends is described here. V15

Jesus had knowledge… He spent time in prayer, listening to His Father every morning and every evening…

Then He hung-out with His disciples and filled them in on what the Father had said because they were a significant part of His plan… (Just as believers continue to be today)

Isn’t it amazing that God see’s us friends?!!

He’s gives us “need to know” clearance… and passes on everything that we need to work together and succeed in His family business…

Lastly… In order to succeed we need to…

1. Open yourself up to new friends.

Based on the redemptive purpose of Scripture and our Salvation… As well as my pastoral concern for New Beginnings Church at this point in time.

I believe more of us need more friends, not less.

So please see this as a very directed pastoral concern in your life…

That you and I… in the fall of 2018… need to get out there and open up our lives more often… to new relationships.

Last week and again this week, I gave you a sheet to challenge/help us to do that.

To help us begin building healthy relationships that show concern/forgiveness, sacrificial love and acceptance of others… which is your reasonable and faithful act of service to your Friend, God the Father.

5 ways that friendship requires an opening up of myself to bring outside people (people we don’t know) inside.

1. Let people into your mind. Listen to them… gather intel about them. (NOT FOR THE PURPOSE OF COMMUNICATING IT WITH OTHERS). That is Gossip, which is sin, and sin destroys relationships.

1. Let them in on some intel about your life, if they seem interested in knowing. Don’t assume people want to know about you. Because not everyone does (at least at first)…

sometimes people just want to be heard… especially at the beginning of a relationship…

Always remember, we have a problem at our core called selfishness that often makes building friendships difficult…,

So we have to intentionally “dial back” our “superiority complex” that “knows everything” and feels the need to

“out do”, “one up” and “straighten out” everyone…

Show love, acceptance and concern. Show others they can trust you not to hurt them with all of that…

And when you’re not busy formulating a response to people or chomping at the bit to tell someone how much better your “experience” was than theirs… they will find value in friendship…

You may also discover that it’s easier to remember their name…

Look for opportunities to use their name in your conversation…

1. Let them into your meals. Luke 14:12-14

(But not just your meals)

1. Let them into your activities.

This should be every church’s goal… to personally invite “outsiders”.

* Only inviting the people that already attend here does little to accomplish our redemptive mission.
* Just opening up the church won’t bring the “outsiders in”…
* Putting announcements on the marquis/facebook/website etc.. does very little…

Our community acts like it’s waiting for a personal invitation!!

But first there has to be something of value thru our friendship with them…

1. Open up your home… And I know that some of you do this… but some of us struggle with it…

Whatever we’ve got going on in our house, our hearts or in our minds that keeps us from inviting unbelievers into our homes, we should probably fix it, clean it or repent of it, because it’s interfering with the purpose for which God saved us.

Some may think, “it’s a hassle”… I’ve got to clean… get right with God… or whatever…

But have you ever noticed that everything “important” seems to have some “hassle” associated with it…?

Remember Jesus didn’t say in V12 this is my opinion, or my suggestion… it’s the medicine we need to make us well…

Yes, Jesus is implying that we’re sick, and there is no hope of getting better unless we take it… all of it!

And not a “generic” or altered form of it by only loving and befriending the people at church…

Let’s end the message today by reciting V13 together…

Are you willing to “lay do your life” for “Forever Friends”?