Video

Do you believe that’s the hope of Christ? For mankind to love, be kind and encourage one another.

Last time I shared a message on “Forever Friendship” with you from John 15:15.

Jesus was days away from wrapping up the Father’s business… John 3:16

John 3:13 “Greater love has no one than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

* God is good!! Amen?
* He is our friend!! Amen? How do we know?
* He laid down His life for us (both in heaven & earth) and let us in on His plan…

According to Scripture:

* God’s in the business of saving people from their sin. Matthew 1:21.
* Giving them “new life” that resembles Jesus. Ephesians 4:22-24.
* Making them His co-workers (just as Jesus was). 1 Corinthians 3:9

Are you God’s friend? Yes!

How does He know? Sacrifice… Dying to the “old desires” that His Word says separates us from Him... His friends allow Him to accomplish His plan thru them.

We need more (not less) people in our life that are living this way, so that they can help each other grow.

And once you’ve found that kind of friend…

It can be very difficult to lose those them… thru a move… or someone passing away… Honor those relationships and use them to grow in Christ, while you can.

Recovering from such a loss can be difficult… The best and fastest way to find NEW friends… is to use the five points that I gave you last time… and become one of those friends to someone else…

Be a friends that benefits someone’s walk with Christ, not just by showing love (the Great Commandment), but also by making disciples who make disciples (the Great Commission).

Because Jesus calls Christians to do both!

There is hardly a better example of this in the N.T. than Paul.

He was a great leader… started many successful churches… his ministry has and continues to do much DAMAGE to the kingdom of darkness thru…

Strategic acts of kindness

In the passage that we’re going to look at today, we’ll see that Paul was very “strategic” in the way he lived and ministered to his friends…

God sent him to certain places (Philippi today), he proclaimed the truth of the Gospel, and he befriended people, led people to Christ by faith and taught them to do the same (discipleship)…

So let’s look briefly at the kindness that Paul demonstrated that can help us be successful in our Christian life/friendships.

Read - Philippians 1:9-11 – Paul prayed not just for his own needs, but mostly for his friends!

That is the kindest, most important thing that we can do for our friends and FUTURE FRIENDS… interceding on their behalf…

What a picture of Christ-likeness! Paul prays for 4 good things…

1. For love to increase in his friends at Philippi. What kind of love?

The (Agape’) love that Jesus taught him about while He discipled Paul in the desert for 3 years… Matt 22:37-39

Think about it, who wins when God answers that prayer for their love to increase?

Everyone!! The kingdom of God…, Paul’s friends…, their friends and families… and ultimately who else? Paul Himself!

The same can happen as we pray for our friends at church and the growing number of people on our list…

One of the friends on my list called to meet with me this week and wound up praying to receive Christ as their Savior!!

PRAYER WORKS!! PRAY MORE!!

We prayed for our server (Orlando) at Olive Garden last night and he was astounded!! He just kept going on and on about how “nice” we were to do that for someone…

As a reminder, I wrote on the check stub that we would continue praying for him… that Jesus loves him and so do we…

b.Paul also prays that they will have greater depth of knowledge…

Not of worldly things that are temporary & passing away, but things that have eternal value & significance (like we have been learning on Wed & Fri as well as yesterday at the men’s breakfast). Eternal perspective…

The third thing Paul prays is that…

c.His friends will possess a greater ability to put their knowledge to use and discern what is best in the circumstances they face in life…

To make decisions that will keep them pure and blameless until the day of Christ’s return.

Discerning what will keep them clean… and on the narrow path of righteousness for His name sake.

To serve Jesus faithfully and accomplish His Will until He returns.

Fourthly, Paul prays that they… his friends at Philippi would be:

d. “Fruit filled”!! No… not blueberry, cherry or apple…

He prays strategically and specifically for a certain kind of “fruit” to be produced in their life…

The kind that only comes through knowing Christ… the “fruit of righteousness” and holiness.

The “outward display” that there has been an inward change…

Showing that they have been “justified” by God, and now live as His friends…

Steve Sjogren (who has been called by many Christian leaders, the grandfather of “servant/kindness evangelism”) and his wife…

They planted the Vineyard church in Cincinnati Ohio. Their first meeting saw 37 in attendance and most of those were out of town well wishers.

Many of his years of ministry saw very low attendance and few gains for the kingdom…

But after God led him to focus on prayer and the example of servant evangelism that Jesus gave in John 13… of humbling ones-self to perform strategic acts of kindness…

The Vineyard Church grew from 5 members then to now over 7000!!

On the list of 100 most influential churches in America in the last 100 years, they are #15!!

They certainly give God the glory for their growth, but they also understand that it was God working thru them…

God works thru humble, self-less hearts… showing Agape’ love, acceptance, forgiveness, kindness & encouragement…

When I served at the Peoria church of the Nazarene, we strategically used one of Steve Sjorgren’s suggestions on our community…

It was a $1 car wash. We stood out in front of the church with signs, etc…

And as people began pulling into the church parking lot to receive their bargain car wash…

most of them were in a state of shock when we began to explain that we were the ones paying them the $1!

And if that didn’t bless people enough… we offered them free hot dogs & hamburgers, chips and water while they waited!!

To some, that makes no sense… It certainly didn’t to the unsaved community we were ministering to!!

Most of them refused to take our dollar!! And instead they had the nerve to try and give us generous donations!! Which we refused!!

There was one guy who was so adamant, we had to take his donation…

He said I’m going home to get my checkbook, and if you don’t cash it, I will mail you a bigger check!!

As our patrons and their families rested and waited for their vehicle to be cleaned, many of them asked WHY we would do such a thing…

Which opened the door for us to talk to them about the humble LOVE/KINDNESS and COMPASSION that Christ has lavished upon mankind…

We led at least one man to Christ that day and a young family started attending the church that was doing crazy acts of kindness that made no sense… Last week the Peoria Church just celebrated it’s 100th year…

The “secret to success”?

* We knew that God had saved us and called us to do it…
* So we knew that God would bless us with more than enough resources to accomplish it…
* We prayed before we started and asked that God would bless the people we ministered to and that His kingdom would be advanced…
* We prayed that people would see & hear Jesus in us…

Does God still want to do great CRAZY things like that thru groups of faithful Christians who’s love for God can’t be contained and shows itself by strategically putting themselves out there for folks who may not know Him YET?

Some of you might be thinking; that may have been great for the Peoria Church, but we can’t do a car wash…

Congratulations, you can check one thing off of your list… But how does He want to work thru you to “make new friends… with people who

do not know Him yet (Pre-Christians)… thru strategic acts of kindness?

In the foyer, I have a list from Steve Sjogren, containing 94 suggestions to help New Beginnings make new friends in our community.

Will you take one, pray, and let me know what the Lord is saying to you that He wants you to participate in?

Sometimes a little motivation is all we need… VIDEO