

# Kingdom Friendships

## New Normal: Church Renewal in Pandemic

2020-05-17 by Ben Deaver at Tallgrass Church on John 15:12-17

### 10:00—Welcome & All the Poor & Powerless (Play video)

- We want to be a church that bears fruit to bless our community.
- Plan to stay for our After Party which is also our Grad Party for our four Tallgrass high school graduates!

### 10:08—Welcome, Sprouts & Miss Elisha!

### 10:15—Mingle Question:

- What's a good song or movie about friendship?
- What do you miss most about your friends?

### 10:20—New Normal: Church Renewal in Pandemic

- God has invited us into something new and profound through this unique season: personal renewal! This current season of disruption has been that divine invitation.
- We've tried to slow way down together, focusing specifically on rediscovering and reclaiming personal habits and practices that have proven from generation to generation to lead us each into personal renewal, growth, and vital connection with God Himself.

*Now we're curious about what's next? What will OUR new normal as a church be?*

**We'll keep Zoomin' for Central Gathering, at least through July!**

- I've had several meetings and good conversations this week about how other organizations and churches from across the country and here locally are beginning to phase into in person meetings.
  - Pastors Prayer, MMA, PastorServe Pastor's Cohort
  - KLC coach, Samuel Preylo, Justin Kastner, Edie Doane, Andy Thompson,
- Our Servant Leadership Team met this week to really discuss opportunities for us moving forward together into the summer. That's our Elders and spouses, LIFE Group leaders (which currently includes our Elders and spouses), and our Staff Team.
- We had a great meeting and really had consensus on our team which was an answer to prayer because I recognize that this COVID-19 era is very challenging.
  - No in person Central Gathering through end of July
  - Look to school system decision-making as communication comes out
  - Continue to follow communication from government leaders
- Tallgrass Church's unique situation on top of the COVID-19 realities
  - Many with underlying conditions
  - One new baby and four pregnancies (that we know of)
  - High kid to adult ratio and with that comes high volunteer needs
  - Desire to stay on Sunday mornings with no facility yet procured

- Keep our College Heights lease for \$50/week down from \$250/week
  - One location that we're proactively exploring is the Boys & Girls Club on 5<sup>th</sup> & Pierre.
  - Continue to explore potential new facilities
- Efficacy of Zoom for our church—Please stay the course and prioritize our Central Gathering on Sundays at 10am! You can even travel and still Zoom in, one of the benefits of Zoomin'!
- Creativity in neighboring—Maddox's Minecraft Church World
  - Church building—cross on top; armor of God statue
  - Church sanctuary—pews, pulpit, Bible
- Creative options of Central Gathering
  - Zoom in to Central Gathering in small groups
  - Utilize parks & outdoor spaces
- We do have concern about not being able to grow wider as a church via Zoom. However, we're excited to grow deeper so we can grow wide with the authority of Jesus in due time.
- Small group meetings
  - Follow the governor's recommendations
  - Be mindful of kids concerns
  - "SLT is staying on the same page together."
  - "LIFE Groups look different in this season. Be in touch with a LIFE Group leader."
  - "Follow the county's guidelines."
  - Get means of communication on website
- In the meantime, keep battling to engage with one another as best you can, stay relationally close while maintaining physical distance.
- COVID-19 Resources on our website, tallgrass.church.
- If things are going very well for you, consider giving a portion of your stimulus money to Tallgrass Church or some other great organization.
- If you are struggling, we have funds available in our Neighboring Fund and other resources to point you to.
- Whatever you do...send your roots deep during this season so we can grow wide with the authority of Jesus in due time.

**Jeremiah 17:7-8** <sup>7</sup> "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. <sup>8</sup> He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to **bear fruit**."

## New Normal: Church Renewal in Pandemic

- More fruit! **BEAR FRUIT!!!**
- The goal of the tree isn't just to be a beautiful and healthy tree but to...bear fruit!
- Friendship has a lot to do with our ability to bear fruit that lasts.
- Come with me to the Upper Room with Jesus and His friends who would shortly after this all betray Him.

**John 15:12-17** <sup>12</sup> "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup> No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and **bear fruit** and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. <sup>17</sup> These things I command you, so that you will love one another."

**PRAY!!!**

## Difficulty of Friendship

- I spoke on *Relating to Friendship* last June on this John 15 passage. You can find that talk on our website.
- Not many songs and movies about *phileo* love. Lots of songs and movies about *eros* love.
  - LOTR and the love story in the appendices
- I've read several articles over the years about the difficulty for men to have friendships later in life.
- I've had countless conversations with guys about the lack of friendships they have.
- I've heard of countless conversations among women about the challenge of finding and keeping good friendships.
- Family relationships, civic relationships, and job relationships are all necessary just to make our lives happen. However, friendship feels like a luxury, something you'd like if and when you get around to it, especially if/when you get married and have your own nuclear family. So, friendships often get squeezed out because friendships take time and energy and you don't have either because maybe you're busy and tired or perceive yourself to be busy and tired. Or maybe because you don't want to deal with the insecurities you'll have to deal with to move towards true friendship.
- **2 Corinthians 6:11-13** <sup>11</sup>We (Paul and at least Timothy) have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. <sup>12</sup>You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. <sup>13</sup>In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also.
- **1 Thessalonians 2:8** So, being affectionately desirous of you, we (Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy) were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.
- **1 Thessalonians 2:17** But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face...
- **Romans 15:22-24** <sup>22</sup>This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. <sup>23</sup>But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, <sup>24</sup>I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while.
- **Philippians 2:19-21** <sup>19</sup>I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. <sup>20</sup>For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. <sup>21</sup>For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.
- **2 Timothy 4:16** At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them!
- Letter writing as 1<sup>st</sup> Century technology
  - Refusing to Zoom in 2020 AD is like refusing to read or hear Paul's letters in 60 AD.
  - "I just don't like Zoom."
  - "I just don't like to read."

## Key Components of Kingdom Friendships:

Constancy, Care-fulness, Candor, Kingdom-mindedness

### 1. Constancy/Consistency/Companionship

- **Proverbs 17:17** A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.
- Through thick and thin.
- This is a hugely limiting factor. True friendship takes time.
- You gotta show up for your friends. You have to be present.
- *But you can't just show up. You have to bring great care.*

## 2. Care-fulness/Compassion

- **Proverbs 17:9** Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends.
- Consider the way Jesus related differently to different people. He was full of care in His relating. He was intentional. He knew how best to love each friend.
- He knew what doubting Thomas needed to believe.
- He knew what John needed to be loved.
- He knew what Peter needed to be restored.
- He knew what Paul needed to be challenged.
- Power of prayer in friendship
- **Colossians 4:12-13a** <sup>12</sup> Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. <sup>13a</sup> For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you...
- *Care often include candor among friends.*

## 3. Candor

- **Proverbs 27:17** Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.
- **Proverbs 27:6** Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.
- **Hebrews 12:11** For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.
- True friends clash...and are sharpened. There's pain involved.
- If you say, "I can't speak truth to that person," then you're not being a friend. You don't love them enough to endure the relational pain to build them up. You are protecting yourself by not engaging in this way.
- I don't have the relational capital to be candid with everyone on this Zoom meeting. I do with some of you. That's because I'm a closer friend to some. That's ok. That's a reality. I can't be everyone's close friend. But I can help us cultivate a culture of Kingdom friendships so that healthy relationships in our body can flourish.
- I can't say to everyone in our church, when I hear the kind of reasons they don't engage with Central Gathering or LIFE Group or the Scriptures or prayer, "That excuse sucks. You're hiding. C'mon, man." I can say that to some of you, because we have a Kingdom friendship.
- Speak the truth in love. Ephesians 4:15.
- "Care" without candor isn't truly loving. And candor without care is harsh. You need BOTH in a healthy friendship.
- *While endure all this candor in friendships unless you're headed towards something greater, a better version of yourselves, a Kingdom-minded maturity where your friendship results in bearing fruit that will last.*

## 4. Kingdom-mindedness

- Cliques vs. Kingdom Friendships—Cliques alienate while friendships serve. Cliques are self-absorbed while friendships are others-focused.
- You can't make true friends by going out there and just saying, "I need a friend. Will you be my friend?" You have to have something compelling that both of your eyes are focused on around which you can unite together.
- Pure Desire Group has built in *Constancy, Care-fulness, Candor, and Kingdom-mindedness* and we are already seeing the fruit of friendship being born. Our Pure Desire Group is united around sexual purity and freedom and the friendships are deepening quickly with desire to expand the circle so others can unite around the same thing...in due time.
- **Ecclesiastes 4:9** Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.
  - There is a return on investment because of the relationship.
  - "If you want something done right, do it yourself." Mantra is ultimately less effective and productive.
  - "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." –African proverb

- **Colossians 1:28-29** <sup>28</sup> Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. <sup>29</sup> For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.
- Conversations that linger.
- Constancy, Care-fulness, Candor, and Kingdom-mindedness in friendship. I have not been this kind of friend. I cannot be this kind of friend...unless...unless Jesus is a friend of mine. And praise be to God, Jesus has chosen me to be His friend.

What a friend we have in Jesus: My Soul Care journey and Jesus as my friend

- Longing to walk the dusty roads with Jesus and His friends. Longing to be in the boat on the Sea of Galilee with Jesus and His friends. Longing to be in the circle of Jesus and His friends.
- And you know what, I am. And you can be too...
- You have to be connected to the Vine to bear fruit! Our church should be a beautiful tree with branches all connected in some beautiful way but all drawing life deeply from the trunk and roots.
- The Gospel
- Jesus' friendship with God was broken so we can be friends of God.
- Because God first loved us, we exist to love God and love our neighbors.
- Because God first extended friendship, we can be friends to others.
- Praise be to God, Jesus has chosen me to be His friend. Praise be to God, Jesus has chosen *you* to be His friend if you'll accept His friend request.
- Come with me again to the Upper Room with Jesus and His friends who would shortly after this betray Him.
- **John 17:20-21** <sup>20</sup> "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."
- Now come with me into the room where Jesus' friends were mourning His death and Jesus *shows up*.
- **John 20:21-22** <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." <sup>22</sup> And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

What a friend we have in Jesus!

**PRAY!!!**

## Reflection Questions:

1. What's your next right step in your friendship with Jesus?
2. Which area of friendship do you need to grow in most—constancy, care-fulness, candor, or Kingdom-mindedness?
3. What's one step towards a Kingdom friendship you can take today? This week? This summer?
  - Exchange entertainment time for lingering conversation

## Resources:

- Ajith Fernando, *Reclaiming Friendship*
- Dennis McCallum, *Organic Discipleship* Chapter 4 "Friendship Building"

## 10:55—What a Friend We Have in Jesus (Emily Strom)

# The Chopping Block:

## Friendship Notes:

- Slack convo
- **Galatians 6:2-5** <sup>2</sup> Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup> For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. <sup>4</sup> But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. <sup>5</sup> For each will have to bear his own load.
- **Proverbs 18:24** A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.
  - Two types of friends, one good, one bad.
- **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12** <sup>9</sup> Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. <sup>10</sup> For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! <sup>11</sup> Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? <sup>12</sup> And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.
- **Exodus 33:7-11** <sup>7</sup> Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. <sup>8</sup> Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise up, and each would stand at his tent door, and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent. <sup>9</sup> When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the LORD would speak with Moses. <sup>10</sup> And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, each at his tent door. <sup>11</sup> Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.
  - Moses and LORD spoke face to face, as friends...even though no man can see the face of the LORD and live!
  - Right before and after this Moses is interceding on behalf of the people.
  - What's Joshua up to during this time? What's the nature of Moses and Joshua's relationship?
- **Exodus 33:18-23** <sup>18</sup> Moses said, "Please show me your glory." <sup>19</sup> And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. <sup>20</sup> But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." <sup>21</sup> And the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, <sup>22</sup> and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. <sup>23</sup> Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen."
- Joke—You can pick your friends but you shouldn't pick your friend's nose.
- After Party a couple Sundays ago got into some serious conversation that lingered.
- Mingle Question: What's a creative neighboring idea you/we could implement in this season?
- Zoom Ideas:
  - Hat day
  - Show and tell
- VidDay—Awesome way to record a movie montage! Used it for a recent 30<sup>th</sup> birthday greeting.
- SLT—I'm so thankful I don't have the power to unilaterally make decisions.
- My friendship journey:
  - Blue House Boyz
  - The Gypsy Men—*The Men That Don't Fit In*, poem by Robert Service—<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/58012/the-men-that-dont-fit-in>
  - Prayer Groups
    - Mitch Trumpp, Austin Koch, me, ?
    - KSUMB Trombone Section Bible Study
    - Navigators Collegiate Ministry Worship Team

- EmmaHouse Seminary
- New Hope Church Staff Team
- Current Team(s)
- The Four Horsemen
- Pure Desire Group—If I told you who was in it, I'd have to kill ya!
- Songs
  - *Rivers & Roads* by The Head and The Heart
  - *Jesus Is A Friend of Mine*
  - *Friends Are Friends Forever* by Michael W. Smith
  - *Friends in Low Places* by Garth Brooks
- Resources:
  - *Reclaiming Friendship* by Ajith Fernando
  - *Organic Discipleship* Chapter 4 “Friendship Building” by Dennis McCallum
  - *Spiritual Relationships That Last* by Gary DeLashmutt
  - Tim Keller talk
  - XSI talk
  - Pray as you go app on Friday, May 15, 2020
- Practical Steps:
  - Marco Polo and other technology including letter writing
  - Cliques vs. Kingdom Friendships
  - Exchange entertainment time for lingering conversation

## “friend” in Psalms and Proverbs

### **Psalm 7:4**

if I have repaid my **friend** with evil or plundered my enemy without cause,

### **Psalm 15:3**

who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his **friend**;

### **Psalm 25:14**

The **friendship** of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant.

### **Psalm 35:14**

I went about as though I grieved for my **friend** or my brother; as one who laments his mother, I bowed down in mourning.

### **Psalm 38:11**

My **friends** and companions stand aloof from my plague, and my nearest kin stand far off.

### **Psalm 41:9**

Even my close **friend** in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.

### **Psalm 55:13**

But it is you, a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar **friend**.

### **Psalm 55:20**

My companion stretched out his hand against his **friends**; he violated his covenant.

### **Psalm 88:18**

You have caused my beloved and my **friend** to shun me; my companions have become darkness.

### **Proverbs 7:4**

Say to wisdom, “You are my sister,” and call insight your intimate **friend**,

### **Proverbs 14:20**

The poor is disliked even by his neighbor, but the rich has many **friends**.

### **Proverbs 16:28**

A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close **friends**.

### **Proverbs 17:9**

Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close **friends**.

**Proverbs 17:17**

A **friend** loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

**Proverbs 18:24**

A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a **friend** who sticks closer than a brother.

**Proverbs 19:4**

Wealth brings many new **friends**, but a poor man is deserted by his **friend**.

**Proverbs 19:6**

Many seek the favor of a generous man, and everyone is a **friend** to a man who gives gifts.

**Proverbs 19:7**

All a poor man's brothers hate him; how much more do his **friends** go far from him! He pursues them with words, but does not have them.

**Proverbs 22:11**

He who loves purity of heart, and whose speech is gracious, will have the king as his **friend**.

**Proverbs 22:24**

Make no **friendship** with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man,

**Proverbs 27:6**

Faithful are the wounds of a **friend**; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

**Proverbs 27:9**

Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a **friend** comes from his earnest counsel.

**Proverbs 27:10**

Do not forsake your **friend** and your father's **friend**, and do not go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity. Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother who is far away.