

Kingdom Friendships Part 2

New Normal: Church Renewal in Pandemic

2020-05-24 by Ben Deaver at Tallgrass Church on John 15:12-17

10:00—Welcome, Sprouts & Miss Elisha!

- Frodo and Sam and friendship
- 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.

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

- In the meantime, keep battling to engage with one another as best you can, stay relationally close while maintaining physical distance.
- 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.
- COVID-19 Resources on our website, tallgrass.church.
- Whatever you do...send your roots deep during this season so we can grow wide with the authority of Jesus in due time.
- Sprouts!

10:05—Sprouts & Miss Elisha!

10:10—Mingle Question:

- When you think of your friends and family, what does it look like when Jesus says, "Love one another as I have loved you?"
- What's your favorite summer activity?
 - Softball/baseball (Amber Johnson)
 - Golf (Ron Goodman)
 - Picnics (Josh Millard)
 - Pool and drinking summery types of drinks (Kassi Chapman)
 - Hotel pools (Lilly Chapman)
 - Stargazing (Dave Geldart)
 - Families creating summer activities at home (Ron Goodman)
- What are your Memorial Day plans?

10:15—New Normal: Church Renewal in Pandemic

Jeremiah 17:7-8 ⁷"Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. ⁸He 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.
- No longer servants, but friends. The friendships in that other room are who Jesus has chosen to build His church through. Jesus' church is an ever-expanding circle of friendships growing deep roots and bearing fruit.

John 15:12-17 ¹²“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵No 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. ¹⁶You 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. ¹⁷These things I command you, so that you will love one another.”

PRAY!!!

Holy Water (Emily Strom)

Key Components of Kingdom Friendships:

- I've added a fifth C component to the beginning and tweaked the last component to keep it consistent with the Cs.
- Courage, Constancy, Care-fulness, Candor, Christ-centeredness (Kingdom-mindedness)

1. Courage

- When I was thinking of who to ask specifically to give friendship testimonies, I realized how difficult it would be to speak to our great desire for friendship. I had to ponder, “Why is giving a testimony about friendship, either about pain in a friendship that wasn't fully realized or joy about a really good and healthy friendship, so vulnerable?” There is so much hurt and disappointment and unmet expectations in friendships that it is very difficult to really drill down into in community. And when a friendship is going great it is difficult to highlight that because it exposes those friendships that are either broken or nonexistent.
- Our insecurities are there, either immediately beneath the surface or somewhere deep down that we can't even put our finger on it.
- Just this week I was in a meeting amongst dear friends who are on a Kingdom-focused team together and one of the men was sharing with tears the pain of rejection in friendship that is stings right now.
- Courage to initiate. Courage to be vulnerable. Courage to have candor.

2. 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.*

3. Care-fulness/Compassion/Intentionality/Encouragement/Grace

- **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
- *Care often include candor among friends.*

4. Candor/Rebuke/Exhortation/Speak the truth in love/Truth

- **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.
- 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.*

5. Christ-centeredness/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.
- Affinity-based friendships vs. Christ-centered friendships
 - Christ is our primary shared affinity.
- Pure Desire Group has built in *Courage, 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** ²⁸ Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹ 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.

Get Practical:

- Most of this applies to any relationship!
- Reminder that there is a reason there are almost 60 “one anothers” in the New Testament. Worthwhile relationships are simultaneously extremely important and extremely difficult. We’ve got to wrap our friendships in the “one anothers”.
- Share “One Anothers in the New Testament” via Chat.

1. Conversations that linger—Exchange entertainment time for lingering conversation

- *Reclaiming Friendships* by Ajith Fernando, quotes on pp. 29, 33
- Pick activities where conversation can happen—walking, jogging, fire pitting, kayaking, etc.
- Lewis Smith just stopping by! The comeback of house visits?!

2. Technology that deepens—Utilize technology to deepen friendships

- If in person face to face is ideal but can’t be had then look for technologies that come as close as possible.
- The Apostle Paul had letter writing. So do we! And, guess what, we also have Zoom, FaceTime, Marco Polo, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, etc. Oh yeah, and Skype! Poor Skype, had a 17 year head start and got left in the dust by Zoom in two weeks.

3. Proactive planning—Proactively plan when you’ll connect with your friend

- Spontaneity springs from proactivity
- Paxton LeMoine is my longest standing friendship in our church but our friendship won’t just naturally deepen. We have to work at it. We have to plan when we’ll spend time together. I’ve appreciated his constancy with me. We walk every other week out at Washington Marlatt Memorial Park.
 - Spontaneous hangouts can still happen and are more likely to happen with our proactive plan in place.
 - We’re working on discovering when our friendversary is so we can celebrate 15 years of friendship.

4. Identify and address the enemies of friendship

- Busyness and competing schedules
- Undervaluing friendship
- Insecurities
- The Enemy
- *What other enemies of friendship can you identify?*

Practical Steps:

1. Conversations that linger
2. Technology that deepens
3. Proactive planning
4. Identify and address the enemies of friendship

What a Friend We Have in Jesus—Reflection Questions:

1. What's your next right step in friendship with Jesus?
2. Which area of friendship do you need to grow in most—courage, constancy, carefulness, candor, or Christ-centeredness?
3. What's one step towards a Kingdom friendship you can take today? This week? This summer?
4. What new ways of cultivating friendship have you discovered in this season?
5. What pain in friendship do you need to grieve? What joy in friendship do you need to express gratitude for?

Discuss & Share—Questions, Comments, Testimonies

Resources:

- Ajith Fernando, *Reclaiming Friendship*
- Dennis McCallum, *Organic Discipleship* Chapter 4 "Friendship Building"
- Jason Upton's music

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** ²⁰ "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ 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** ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." ²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Way Maker

- We need God to make a way for Kingdom friendships in our community because we cannot do this on our own. There are steps we can take but a true Kingdom friend is a gift we must find and receive.
- God gives Aaron to Moses
 - **Exodus 4:10-14** ¹⁰ But Moses said to the LORD, “Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.” ¹¹ Then the LORD said to him, “Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? ¹² Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.” ¹³ But he said, “Oh, my Lord, please send someone else.” ¹⁴ Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses and he said, “Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart.
- God gives Jonathan to David
 - **1 Samuel 18:1-3** As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. ² And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. ³ Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul.
 - **2 Samuel 1:25-27** ²⁵ “How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle! “Jonathan lies slain on your high places. ²⁶ I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant have you been to me; your love to me was extraordinary, surpassing the love of women. ²⁷ “How the mighty have fallen, and the weapons of war perished!”
- God gives Timothy to Paul
 - **Philippians 2:19-21** ¹⁹ I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. ²⁰ For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. ²¹ 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!

Pray

10:55—Way Maker (Emily Strom)

11:00—The Benediction (Dave Geldart)

The Chopping Block:

One Anothers in the New Testament:

LOVE one another—John 13:34-35; 15:12, 17; Romans 12:10; 13:8; 14:13; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11-12; 2 John 1:5

SERVE one another—Gal. 5:13, 22; Philippians 2:3; 1 Peter 4:9; 5:5

ACCEPT one another—Romans 15:7, 14

STRENGTHEN one another—Romans 14:19

HELP one another—Hebrews 3:13; 10:24

ENCOURAGE one another—Romans 14:19; 15:14; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 3:13; 10:24-25

CARE for one another—Galatians 6:2

FORGIVE one another—Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13

SUBMIT to one another—Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 5:5

COMMIT to one another—1 John 3:16

BUILD TRUST with one another—1 John 1:7

BE DEVOTED to one another—Romans 12:10

BE PATIENT with one another—Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13

BE INTERESTED in one another—Philippians 2:4

BE ACCOUNTABLE to one another—Ephesians 5:21

CONFESS to one another—James 5:16

LIVE IN HARMONY with one another—Romans 12:16

DO NOT BE CONCEITED with one another—Romans 13:10

DO NOT PASS JUDGMENT on one another—Romans 14:13; 15:7

DO NOT SLANDER one another—James 4:11

INSTRUCT one another—Romans 15:14

GREET one another—Romans 16:16; 2 Corinthians 13:12

ADMONISH one another—1 Thessalonians 5:14; Colossians 3:16

SPUR one another toward love & good deeds—Hebrews 10:24

MEET with one another—Hebrews 10:25

AGREE with one another—1 Corinthians 1:10

BE CONCERNED for one another—Hebrews 10:24

BE HUMBLE to one another—Ephesians 4:2

BE COMPASSIONATE to one another—Ephesians 4:32

DO NOT BE CONSUMED by one another—Galatians 5:14-15

DO NOT ANGER one another—Galatians 5:26

DO NOT LIE to one another—Colossians 3:9

DO NOT GRUMBLE against one another—James 5:9

GIVE PREFERENCE to one another—Romans 12:10

BE AT PEACE with one another—Romans 12:18

SING with one another—Ephesians 5:19

BE OF THE SAME MIND with one another—Romans 12:16; 15:5

COMFORT one another—1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11

BE KIND to one another—Ephesians 4:32

LIVE IN PEACE with one another—1 Thessalonians 5:13

CARRY one another's burdens—Galatians 6:2