

Spiritual Friendship

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[0 : 00] Yeah, so, well, yeah, lots of stories from those days that we don't have time for. But as Jesse said, first of all, good morning, everybody. I'm Donnie, and it's my wife, Jill. One of our sons, Wyatt, our other son, is at a birthday thing this morning.

So, but we're really glad to be here with you. So as Jesse said, we're starting a new series this morning. We do typically go through books of the Bible. We feel like that is like, you know, if you think about like eating healthy, you know, a good healthy diet, so to speak, is just kind of working through books of the Bible because you get to cover a whole bunch of stuff that otherwise you would conveniently leave out.

However, it's good to supplement every now and again. And we do that with these topical series really because, you know, there are topics that they may come up kind of here and there, you know, but if you had to sort of try to pick and choose when these topics came up and then, you know, on your own, try to figure out, okay, well, what does the Bible have to say about that whole thing? It would take you forever. It would be pretty confusing. And so every now and again, it's good for us just to push pause, work through some of these topics to help you get a more comprehensive view of what the Scriptures say about a given subject.

And, you know, I've been, I've had the privilege of leading One Harbor now for the last like 14 and a half years. I've done a lot of preaching and, but I have really, you know, had to kind of reckon with the reality is that, you know, we can preach through lots of books of the Bible and people can learn lots of things.

[1 : 30] They can even learn lots of things about the gospel, which is incredible, but still not know how to live their lives. And I think that is the case for a lot of Christians. We maybe know a lot about Scripture.

We maybe know a lot about the gospel, but we don't know how to apply any of it to everyday life. And so that's what this series is designed to do. We call it Fruitful, Making the Most of Our Days. Another kind of way to approach it is how do we make the most of our kind of dot, dot, dot. And so we're going to cover different subjects and really just step into some familiar spaces, you know, kind of that we're all living in, you know, roles that we play, seasons of life, and try to help you see what does the Bible say about those things so that you know how to live according to Scripture.

Now, some of the topics like today's are going to be ones that are just great for everybody. Like every single person needs to hear this topic. Some of the topics are going to be dealing with specific groups in the room, you know.

And so it might be singleness or it might be marriage or it might be youth or it might be kind of that later stages in life or whatever the case may be. And I just want to remind you because I know the temptation could be when one of those comes up, you think, oh, well, you know, I'm glad the single people are here.

[2 : 45] I'm glad the married people are here, but that's not really for me. I should have skipped today and gone and done something else. I want to remind you a couple of things the Bible tells us about us as a church is that we're a body.

And so we're like the human body. We're all different parts, but we're connected. And when one part is hurting, all the parts feel it and want to lean in and help.

And even though, you know, we're different from each other, we care about each other equally. And so there's that body imagery. And also, as Jesse said earlier, the Bible tells us that we're a family. And so when these topics come up that you think, well, that's not really me or that's not my season of life, and you want to kind of drift into this sort of modern, sort of selfish, I can't see why this immediately benefits me, so I'll just disconnect and think about something else for a while.

I want to encourage you rather to lean in hard on those particular ones and go, okay, Lord, help my friends, my family in the room who this is their season of life.

Help them today. And I want you to also be thinking and saying things like this, like, God, help me to see how I can be a blessing to them. How can I serve them in this? How can I encourage them in this season of life?

[3 : 55] And so anyway, we're going to jump in this morning. We're going to look at this topic of friendships. And how do we make the most of our friendships? And we hit on this kind of idea back in January.

Who was here in January for that series? A few of us. All right. Yes, you can't even remember. It was not that long ago. But I won't even remotely ask you to, like, okay, raise your hand if you remember everything we said in that sermon, all the verses and all the points, because I know it's not how it works.

I know that you really can't remember what we talked about last week. And that's all right. You know, you've got a lot of stuff coming at you. You know, there's, like, you know, social media or news or just life or work or school.

It's just bombarding you with all kinds of stuff. And so we will, some of the things we're going to hit this morning, we hit back in January. But I know you don't remember those things. And if you do, you get a gold star. But for the rest of us normal people, it'll be a good refresher.

My goal this morning is to try to impress upon you the importance of friendships, what the Bible has to say about it, and really to help lift your head and give you an expanded vision for what could be.

[5 : 06] A good friend of mine, Josh Curry, who leads a church in Oklahoma, years and years ago when we first met each other, he wrote me a little card and gave it to me and said, I want to grow old together.

I want to sit on rocking chairs one day watching our grandkids play while we're still making much of Jesus. And it was a moment for me. It was a line in the sand for me where I was like, oh, my gosh, that's possible.

It's possible to, like, make it to the end. It's possible to, like, make it to the end with friends. And it caused me to get that expanded vision for what could be and really put on me the importance of friendships.

And so I hope that I actually want to just pray. I want to do more than hope. I pray this morning, Lord, that you would do that. You know where everyone in the room is at on this subject, you know, the various joys or disappointments, disillusionment, whatever it is.

You know where we're at. And so I pray this morning you would help us. Today that would be a moment where you impress upon us the importance of friendship and expand our vision to see what could be.

[6 : 10] In Jesus' name, amen. Okay, so to begin with, it's good to actually know that friendship is a really big theme in the Bible. You may not know that. But from the very, very beginning, what we see is humans were made to be in relationships.

Humans were made to be in relationships. Now, Genesis 2, 18, we learned this is the second chapter in the Bible. If you're new to the Bible, God has just made everything, chapter one. And then he says in chapter two, it is not good that the man should be alone.

I'll make a helper fit for him. So up until this point, everything God has said, you know, so far is it's good. It's good. It's good. It's good. And if we look at Adam's life, let's just look at it. First of all, Adam lived in paradise.

Like no mosquitoes, no no-see-ums, no shark attacks, no drama, nothing. Adam lived in paradise. He also had never sinned.

So he didn't have shame. He didn't have regret. He didn't have any guilt. No one had ever sinned against Adam. So he didn't have any like, he wasn't carrying any like trauma or any hurt or any wounds or any baggage. Nothing.

[7 : 19] So just picture this. He's living in paradise. He's got no hardships at all. He's got no sin. He's got no struggles. He's got a sweet job.

He just names animals all day. Like he just, and that one will be that. No, he's just like, that's a great job. It feels like just a solid just line of employment, you know? So he's living in paradise.

He's got no sin. He's got no problems. He's got a sweet job. Oh, also he has God. So he can just talk to God anytime he wants. He can, you know, spend time with God.

I mean, things are pretty good for Adam. You know, we would say like, man, this guy's got it all together. And yet God said, actually he doesn't. God looks at the situation and goes, not good. And as I said, it's the first thing in the Bible we see that's not good from God's perspective. Now I say that just to say, sometimes we think, oh yeah, friends are really important when you're in crisis. [8 : 16] You know, but when life's kind of sweet, you sort of drift to isolation. And life could not have been better for Adam. It was perfect. And God said, yeah, not good.

Everything was good in Adam's life, but it wasn't good from God's perspective. Everything can be good in your life, but it's not enough if you're alone.

So Adam Young has this podcast. It's called The Place We Find Ourselves. And he, I heard him say this recently. He said, you cannot, this is going to be a bit of a shocking statement. So just, I'll explain it.

You cannot be fully human in isolation. You can't be fully human in isolation. It's what we see here. God said, it's not good for man to be alone.

There's something missing here. We say at One Harbor, we usually say lone rangers are dead rangers, or we say they're dangerous rangers, right? They're dead rangers. It's our way of pushing back on that isolation.

[9 : 15] But if we look at Genesis 2, a lot of times what we do with this is we make it just about marriage. Because for Adam's, in Adam's case, God solved that isolation, that aloneness. He did solve it with marriage.

He created Eve, and you'll hear about that here in a couple weeks when we focus on marriage. But I don't think that this idea of it's not good for man to be alone, he's got to get married, that cannot mean, that cannot be what it's all about.

Because later we find out with Jesus, you know, the perfect man, that he doesn't get married. And so is Jesus not fully human because he's not married? Absolutely not.

In fact, like I said, we'll do a whole sermon on singleness, and we'll look at that thing. But what we're getting at here is God's saying it's not good for any of us, for human beings, to be isolated.

It's not good for us to be isolated. And so relationships are a big deal. Friendships are a big deal from the very, very beginning. Now, I wish it was as simple as that, and hands in, you know, one harbor on three, one, two, three, break, let's all go make friends, we're out of here.

[10 : 17] But it's more complicated than that. And I think the biggest reason is because we have lost vision for deep friendships. We've lost a vision for it as a culture for deep friendships.

I read the Lonesome Dove series a few years ago, and I was so moved. I was so struck by this deep friendship between these two men.

And a fierce commitment to each other through, like, thick and thin, high and low, the worst of each other. I mean, all the seasons of life, it was just unbelievable. And it really struck me, like, how rare is this to have friends like that?

I mean, it feels, it doesn't feel like it happens anymore. Today, when we think of the word friends, we often think of Facebook, Facebook friends, you know, which it's like, it's so far from that.

It's so far from actually people who know you, who they know a version of you, an edited little manicured version of you, selected version of you. Like, they're acquaintances at best, or bots.

[11 : 21] I mean, they're not even real. Facebook friends, drinking buddies, you know. Too often in our culture, we are settling for the superficial and the shallow when it comes to our friendships.

And the result is that most of us are wandering around isolated and distracted. And we are, when you put that up against the, the scriptures tell us that we have an enemy who is like a roaring lion who wants to eat you.

When you're wandering around isolated and distracted, you're prime pickings for this thing. We settle for the superficial and the shallow, and I think it's because anything deeper makes us uncomfortable.

My friend, Steve Huber, who leads a church up north, he turned me on to this book, The Overflowing of Friendship, Love Between Men and the Creation of the American Republic. Heck of a title there. Written by this guy, Richard Godbeer. And in it, he quotes letters from men to other men. This was back in like the 1700s, 1800s.

[12 : 25] And I'm going to read you a couple of these quotes. And I want to just tell you, I'm about to get your attention. I'm about to make you feel uncomfortable. All right? So this, just, just warning you right now.

The first one is a letter a guy named Daniel Webster wrote. He went on, he was at Dartmouth College. He went on to become the 14th Secretary of State. But he wrote this letter about his friend, George, when they were leaving for Christmas break.

This was a man writing to another man. I'm just going to read this to you. As Daniel Webster prepared to leave Dartmouth College on vacation in December 1798, the young student may perhaps have welcomed a reprieve from scholarly labors, but what seemed to have preoccupied Daniel on the eve of his departure was the unwelcome prospect of having to spend several weeks apart from his friend, George Herbert.

Daniel committed his feelings to paper in the form of a poem. Here we go. Quote, Yes, George, I go. I leave the friend I love. Long since it was written in the books above, but what good God I leave thee do I say.

The thoughts distract my soul and fill me with dismay. But heaven decreed it, let me not repine. I go, but George, my heart is knit with thine. Neither time nor distance, he averred, could tear my heart from the dear friend I love.

[13:42] Should you be distant as far as Africa's sand, by fancy picture you'd be near at hand. This shall console my thoughts till time shall end. Though George be absent, George is still my friend.

He goes on to say this, God beard us. He says, Now let me just, we're getting close to Thanksgiving break here.

You can feel fall in the air. Imagine that a young college man that you know takes to Instagram and writes a poem to one of his fellow classmate friends, a buddy of his, as they leave.

And this is what he writes as an Instagram post. We would be like, huh, interesting choice. You know, like it would be a bit confusing for us.

Let me give you another great example from this book. This is now between two itinerant Methodist ministers. They ride on horseback through the south preaching the gospel. And they would write to one another.

[15:03] Despite, quote, despite their physical separation, Meade and Cobbler, these two pastors, remained, quote, united in faith and love, sustaining one another through prayer and correspondence. Listen, I'm just reading these quotes.

Quote, how are you, my dear? Meade wrote. Quote, I am daily with you in spirit. The two men wrote long and effusive letters to one another as they each labored to awaken southern souls.

In one of these letters, Meade expressed his feelings for Cobbler in the form of a, you guessed it, a poem. Here we go. Quote, although we ride so far apart, I love you in my very heart.

I've often thought if I could be a pattern as in you I see, I'd often feel God's spirit beam and catch a hold of a living stream. Oh, could I see your solemn face.

I take you in my arms embrace. Again, probably not what you're going to see between two buddies on an Instagram post. It was not long ago that this was normal in American history.

[16:05] There's tons of examples of this. Soldiers writing letters like this to one another. We've seen college buddies, preachers. It was not long ago that in our culture, in our nation's history, we could find lots of examples of that.

And it's not just in our nation's history. We have some really great models for friendships like this in the Bible. Ruth and Naomi. If you look at Ruth chapter 1, 16. Ruth said, It feels kind of like those poems.

It feels kind of like those letters. Like, oh, so the Bible's got some example here. Naomi was committed to Ruth till death. We see no problem with this when it comes to women. We don't really struggle with this.

Like, we're okay with women having friendships like this. There's lots of movie examples. Think of Thelma and Louise. One possible option there.

The movie Goodbye Earl. I'm sorry, the song Goodbye Earl. Has anyone heard that song? Man, try to tell me you don't get emotional when Marianne takes that red-eye flight.

[17:29] And she shows up in the middle of the night, Wanda's side in the ER. And then she sits down and Wanda's all, I mean, I get full-on emotional. I know the song. And I'm like sobbing.

Like, they're going to go kill Earl. And I'm like, I know it's wrong. But like, man, it still just gets me in the feels, you know? We don't struggle with women having these kinds of friendships typically.

So we've just seen Ruth and Naomi. Now, let me just read you another Bible example. 1 Samuel 18.1. As soon as he finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David.

And Jonathan loved him as his own soul. Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as his own soul. He stripped himself of his robe and gave it to David. His armor, his sword, his bow, his belt. And David went out and was successful. Wherever he went. There's this knitting of hearts between these two men. And fast forward sometime later, without getting into the context we don't have time for this morning.

[18 : 29] But they arrange a meetup. And David's hiding behind this stone heap. And he gets up and he falls down on his face. He bows three times.

David and Jonathan kiss one another and wept with one another. It says, David weeping the most. And then they send each other away. They bless each other. Go in peace.

We've sworn, because we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord. Saying the Lord shall be between me and you. And between our offspring forever. We just don't know how to handle so much hugging, kissing, vowing emotion between two men.

And so what people have done through the years when they read about David and Jonathan is they assume it's romantic. Why? Why? Because we cannot process two men being such good friends. And actually being emotional about their friendship towards one another. We're okay pretty much for the most part with women having friendships like this. But we don't know what to do with men doing this.

[19 : 35] And so we turn it into something romantic. Which is a tragedy because all people, all humans, as we said, need friendship, need relationship. David, we go on to see in his life, he was at his very best when he was surrounded by his friends.

He was at his very worst when he got isolated. You know, if you know the story, he gets isolated for about five minutes. And he ends up, you know, committing adultery and having this woman's husband killed.

Way too many of us are isolated like David. Even though we are surrounded by other people, we're actually isolated. Proverbs 18, 24 says it like this.

A man of many companions may come to ruin. How's that possible? Well, you got all these people around you. Yeah, but they're just companions. They're just buddies.

There's a friend who sticks closer to a brother. The implication there is just one friend like that can keep you from ruin. Versus a whole bunch of Facebook friends who just watch you fall.

[20 : 37] But most of us, or a lot of us, especially the men, don't have anything close to this. Now, I don't say that to say, I know that there's major issues between women and deep friendships.

I totally know that. But in fact, you know, when women come in, you know, when I said this last week in Moorhead, ladies were like, yeah, but don't forget, like, we can get catty and we can be cruel. Absolutely. Like, absolutely.

There's all that. But statistically, even, there is an issue here with men that just is significant. I'm going to just give you a couple stats here. In 1990, 55% of American men reported having six or more close friends.

So over half of the American men, men in America said, I've got six or more close friends. Fast forward to 2021, only 27% of men said the same thing. So now we cut that in half.

In 1990, 14% of men said they have two or less friends. But in 2021, 15% of men said they had zero friends.

[21 : 39] 33% said they had two or less friends. And then again, in 2022, men reported, quote, receiving emotional support from a male friend half as often as women received from female friends.

So again, I know that plenty of women are in trouble with this subject too, but I'm just drawing this out because there is statistical data here that shows men are worse off in this.

And I can't help but think it's because we've always culturally normalized women being close and we've always sexualized men being close. It's incongruent even with our own nation's history.

And it's really incongruent with scripture. And it's killing men. And so it's something we need to push back on. Isolated, distracted.

Man, those are the kinds of recipes for ruin. As followers of Jesus, though, we don't just need statistics. We have Bible verses. And so we don't have a choice on this matter.

[22 : 43] In fact, Jesus said it like this in John 15. He says, this is my commandment that you love one another as I've loved you. Commandment. That's Bible language for you don't get to vote about it.

Right? It is a thing. Jesus said, I command that you love one another as I've loved you. And he goes on to say, greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. Now, we don't believe that as a society.

We think about like what's the greatest love. We think about Shakespeare stuff. Or we think about, you know, the notebook. Or like some kind of like romance. It's all romance for us. It's all, we think that's the greatest picture of love.

It's like, is romance. But actually Jesus said, no, it's not. The greatest picture of love is this. The way that you lay your life down for your friends. He said, you're my friends. I've called you friends.

And he goes on to end that by saying, I command you so that you would love one another. And so this is helpful for us as followers of Jesus to see and reckon with is that Jesus in this passage, he calls us into friendship with himself and into friendship with each other.

[23 : 48] I don't know if you've ever seen this meme before. Nobody talks about Jesus's miracle of having 12 close friends in his 30s. Yeah, man.

It's a thing, you know. Friendships are hard to come by. Friends are hard to come by. And they're harder to come by the older you get. Jerry Seinfeld, if you're a Seinfeld fan, he had this great bit way back in the day on how when you're a little kid, your friend is the person who's not an adult in front of you right now.

So he said, if you walk outside and there is a kid that's walking by, riding a bike by, they're not an adult. Bam, that's my friend. He's like, come inside, jump on my bed. We're friends. And then Jerry said, if you find out that they like anything that you like, anything, like you like Cherry Cola, I like Cherry Cola too, he says, oh my gosh, we're best friends.

Like, that's what it's like when you're a kid, you know. There can be this, like, that's my friend. We're friends. We're best friends. But he goes on to make the point that, like, as you get into your 30s, like, it's, like, impossible to make new friends, right?

The older you get, the harder it gets to make friends. And so, yeah, it is kind of a thing that Jesus had friends, that he had good friends. But really, the real shocker here is not that Jesus had friends as an adult male.

[25 : 05] The shocker here is that he wanted to be friends with us. That he would know, if you're new, just checking out who Jesus is, this is, like, crazy. That Jesus knows everything about you and everything about me and yet loves us and wants to be our friends.

That's crazy. He doesn't just want to fix us and then tell us to leave him alone. He actually wants to be in relationship with us. He wants to be friends with us. But he doesn't want to just be friends with us, like, me and Jesus versus the whole world.

No. He wants us to be friends with each other. He says, I command you. And that word you is actually y'all. It's you all, right? So Jesus says, these things I command y'all so that y'all would love one another.

That's what he's saying. I know. You didn't know that you read Greek, but you do. It's right there. I've called y'all friends. I've called you friends with me. I've called you to be friends with each other. He doesn't want us to just be individual friends with him.

I'm going to say something that feels a bit controversial. You need more than Jesus. You need friends. You need more than Jesus. Sometimes we say, all I need is Jesus.

[26 : 15] All I need is Jesus. Not according to Jesus. According to Jesus, you also need friends. And we do this. It's kind of a ridiculous thing. I mean, you do need more than just you need food.

You need water. You need shelter. You need things. But you need friends. You need friends. And when we do this, when we say, all I need is Jesus. What we're really doing is we're spiritualizing individualism.

That's what we're doing. We're spiritualizing isolation. And we're usually doing that in response to hurt and disappointment. Right? Normally what happens is we get hurt. We get disappointed. And so we swing the pendulum.

And we're over here. Like, all I need is Jesus. I can buy myself flowers. Write my own name in the sand. Like, I don't need anybody else. Just me and Jesus. I think I've thoroughly embarrassed Wyatt that I quoted that song.

I'm sorry. You and I are, God made us needy. That is a tough thing for us.

[27 : 15] Because we, in our society, we think you pull yourself up by your bootstraps. You get out there on your own. You're your own man, your own woman. You don't need nobody. That is not Bible. You are needy. You're needy.

We were over there chainsawing a tree off of a lady's house yesterday morning. And who, this woman, their whole world is falling apart before all this happened. And now there's a giant pine tree laying on her house.

And one of the guys who was with me at the end, she was just in the yard very emotional. He just said, hey, he just said, I can see you're a strong woman. But there's just, that's only going to get you so far. Some things you can't do by yourself, no matter how strong you are.

You need community. You need others. As strong as she is, she couldn't get that tree off of her house. She needed community. We are needy. It's okay to be needy. I'm not talking about codependency.

I'm talking about healthy human beings are still needy. They need, we need friends. You do not outgrow it by age or by maturity. You need friendships. You need friendships.

[28 : 16] Jesus calls us into friendship with himself and into friendship with each other. And then he goes on and expels it out. He says, it's a friendship that loves one another. I command you, love one another.

So spiritual friendships, they're marked by love for one another. It's what we see between David and Jonathan, between Ruth and Naomi. But it's not, it's not shallow, sappy love.

It's not, it's not, it's not romantic love. It's robust love that can handle anything. Listen to what Proverbs 17 says. A friend loves at all times. A brother is born for adversity.

That's the kind of friendship. This is a robust picture of friendship that we see in scripture. A robust love for one another. And then, you know, we can see that as we look more at scripture, and like I said, we don't have time to hit all of it today.

But spiritual friends, they have this responsibility to shape one another. You probably had a grandma maybe who said something like, you know, you become who you hang out with. You do that.

[29 : 15] Your friends shape you. So if you think about your own life, what kind of legacy do you want to leave when you're done? What do you want the end to look like? The quality of your friends is actually going to help you or hurt you getting there.

How deep or how shallow you're going with good friends is going to determine you making it to the end or not, and how much regret you have with you when you get there. But it requires a kind of vulnerability.

It requires you being willing to be shaped. That word vulnerable is an interesting word. The Latin word is bonus, which means to wound.

And so sometimes when people say like they're vulnerable, they say this phrase, I let my guard down. Literally, it's what the word means. You make yourself susceptible to wounding. You put your shield down.

You create vulnerability between you and another human being, and you give them the ability to wound you. Why on earth would we want to do that? That sounds like a terrible idea. Why would we want to create the opportunity for someone to hurt us, to wound us?

[30 : 21] The Bible answers it. It says in Proverbs 27, 6, faithful are the wounds of a friend. There's some wounding that we need. Because it goes on and says, profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

What is it saying here? It's saying that you need people who are in your life enough to really know you, who you've let your guard down. You've given the ability to wound you so they can look you in the face every now and again and say, hey, I love you.

I really know you. And we're going to have a hard chat here. Because there's something going on that you need to change. That's a wounding thing. But enemies are just going to kiss up to you.

It's profuse. Scripture says here. They're just going to, oh, everything's good. Everything's great.

They're not actually going to tell you the truth. You need friends who are going to wound you in love with the truth. That doesn't sound like fun at all.

You know, the Bible says that's the very thing that makes friendship so good. In Proverbs 27, verse 9, it says, oil and perfume make the heart glad. And listen, the sweetness of a friend.

[31 : 25] What makes a friendship sweet? It comes from his earnest counsel. The Bible says, far from that being the worst part of the friendship, that is the best part. That is the best part.

When someone loves you enough to get in your face and say, I love you. But, man, I just watch the way you talk to your spouse or your kids, and it's not okay. I love you, but, man, you're destructive in this behavior.

And I want to come alongside you and help you change. Man, that earnest counsel, the Bible says that is the best part. That's the sweetest part. And a bunch of companions just stands around going, I don't know, seems fine to me.

No, you need friends who love you, who know you, who you can open yourself up and be vulnerable with. Again, this is a robust version of friendship. Proverbs 27, 17, iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.

There's this friction that comes between us, but it's for the friendship. It's for each other. Solomon says in Ecclesiastes that you can fall in a hole.

[32 : 28] And you're going to die in that hole if you're by yourself. Or you're going to freeze to death at night if you don't have someone to keep you warm. And, folks, you're going to face cold nights of the soul.

And you're going to make stupid decisions like me, and you're going to fall in a pit. And it's not so bad if you have friends. But it will kill you if you don't.

Ecclesiastes 4, 10, And woe to him who's alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up. Just a couple more quick things. One, spiritual friends, we bring our friends to Jesus.

We looked at this back in January, and we don't have time to look at it this morning. But in Luke 5, there's this beautiful picture of this man who was a paralytic from birth who wanted to get to Jesus so he could be healed. And his friends carried him to the house.

They couldn't get in the house because it was packed. So they climbed up on the roof, tear the roof apart, lower him down through the panels to Jesus. And Jesus looks up, and he says he saw their faith.

[33 : 27] He saw the friends' faith. The friends were indispensable in this miracle. The guy couldn't have got to Jesus without these friends. And Jesus saw their faith, and it's mentionable, right?

Sometimes we have to carry each other to Jesus. And what are the ways we do that? Well, James tells us two of the best ways are confession of our sin and prayer for one another.

It's that sharing of, man, our sins and our shortcomings are confessing our sins to one another and praying for bringing one another to Jesus. This is just some stuff.

I hope it's helping you to lift your eyes a little bit, maybe put some pressure on you to kind of, you know, think about some of the relationships you have. Maybe it's bringing up, and I don't think I have any friends like this at all.

I think all of God's companions, and that's a good thing to go, okay, what are my next steps there? How do I, you know, how do I step into some friendships like this? I mean, you know, I didn't know Jesse was going to do that wonderful little introduction there.

[34 : 31] But it's taken a long time to have the relationship we have. A long time. Yeah, over 20 years. That's a long time, you know. And it's not been all easy. Some of it's been hilarious, but it's not been all hilarious.

It's been some tough stuff, you know. So I hope this morning we've helped kind of get a glimpse of what could be, what should be, and impress upon you the importance of this.

But I want to just end by just addressing something I think kills, crushes most of these friendships. It's idealism. Think about that old James Taylor kind of song there, you know, when you're down and troubled and you need a helping hand and nothing's going right.

Close your eyes and think of me, and soon I'll be there to brighten up even your darkest night. Just call my name. You know wherever I am. I'll come running to see you again. Winter, spring, summer, fall, all you got to do is call.

I'm sorry. It'll be in your head for like a week. But I'll be there. You know, I'll be there. You got a friend. And so I want to say I like that culture, and that is rare for culture to exalt friendship like that.

[35 : 40] But they're swinging too far there. They're exalting friendship too high because there's no reality to that. That you're going to have a friend that no matter what you're going through in your darkest night, just close your eyes and bam, they're going to be there.

You know, or whatever it is, just call it. Oh, I'll rush right over. That's just not reality. No friend on this earth can be a friend like that, but there is a friend who can.

And that's Jesus. Jesus is actually the only, it's like, it's like he's, the one James Taylor is singing about. Like no one else can actually meet that. So man, always remember that your friends aren't Jesus.

Nobody can be a friend like him. And David, we've talked a lot about him this morning. He had a, he had some low moments when it came to friendship. And Psalm 55, he says, it's not an enemy who taunts me.

I could bear that. Not an adversary. I could hide from him. It's you. A man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend. We used to take sweet counsel together in God's house.

[36 : 45] He says more about this in Psalm 41. Even my close friend whom I trusted, who ate my bread, who ate in my house, has lifted up his heel against me.

There's this shared journey of following God together. There was trust. There was trust. There was worship. There was shared meals in David's home. And David here is experiencing this deep, this deep, devastating grief that comes from the death of a close spiritual friendship.

I love talking about this subject, but I'll tell you that I walk with a little bit of limp here. I've got some stories like that too. Probably the most painful things I've walked through in my life have been broken spiritual friendships.

And David here, who's slain thousands, who's the manliest of men, is crushed by the loss of this friendship. And so I just, I think that's, it's worth you hearing that too.

It's not all just smiles and hugs and, you know, good chats. The Bible is realistic about these things. Sometimes your friends are great and sometimes they let you down.

[37 : 53] Sometimes they just leave you for dead. But Jesus' friends did that to him in Luke 22.

They literally left him for dead. So if you are hurting from the loss of friendship, from disappointment, from disillusionment, man, Jesus understands.

He understands. And only he can be the perfect friend. And, you know, that old hymn, what a friend we have in Jesus. There's no one like him. There's no one like him.

And so I want to, I don't want to like not say that because I want you to catch a vision for friendship. I want you to go fight for friendships. But I want you to not assume that your friends are going to be perfect because only Jesus is.

It's a certain way to crush a friendship is to try to make your friend Jesus or to try to be Jesus for your friends. As the band comes up, if you're here or you're watching this and you're not yet a follower of Jesus, Elliot said this earlier this morning.

You know, he said, you know, that Jesus was called the friend of sinners. I love that so much. That was a moment for Jesus where he could have said, I'm not their friend. They're kind of grossing me out over here.

[39 : 05] And, you know, I'm God. I can't be their friends. You know, I'm here to fix them and I'm moving along. No, no, no. But Jesus was happy to be called the friend of sinners. He was the friend to the far off and the beat down, the suffering, the shameful, the lost, the sick, the broken hearted.

And if you're here and you don't know him, he doesn't want to just fix you. He wants to be your friend. But the Bible says that before we're his followers, we're not his friends, we're his enemies. We live in rebellion to him.

We're doing whatever we want. The Bible calls it sin. We don't love him. We don't obey him. And so he wants to be our friends. But the first step actually is to say, Jesus, I want to be your follower.

Forgive me of my sin. Forgive me of living life however I want. And I surrender my life to you. Lord Jesus, save me. Be my king. Be my Lord.

Be my savior. Be my friend. If that's you this morning, you can pray something like that or you can come talk to some of us at the end. We'd love a chance to talk with you and pray with you about that. For the rest of us, here in just a moment, we're going to take communion.

[40 : 12] There's tables around the room. I think you can figure out how to get there. But I want to just remind us kind of something to think about when we go to this meal. In John 13, Jesus does this shocking thing.

He washes his disciples' feet. His disciples who are his friends. He washes their feet. And it was a gross job back then. I mean, I'm not volunteering to do it today. And you guys are all wearing shoes and you probably took showers. Back then, it was seriously gross.

And Jesus did this. He washed his disciples' feet. But at the very beginning of that chapter, Jesus says this. It says that he loved them to the end. And so as you and I go to this meal this morning, it is a chance to examine ourselves.

And if you're like me, you're thinking about areas where you've let Jesus down or where you've not been a good friend. All those different things. It's a chance to examine ourselves. But we don't

come beating ourselves up.

We come to the one who loved us to the end. I mean, Jesus was about to wash the feet of people who were going to abandon him, deny him, betray him, sell him out, literally.

[41 : 12] Leave him for dead, literally. And he still washed their feet. He still loved them to the end. And so no matter what position you're in this morning, if you're a follower of Jesus, you are a friend of Jesus.

You're coming to a table, a meal of grace. So yeah, examine yourself. Do business with the Lord. But eat and drink this morning. His body broken for you. His blood shed for you. Knowing of his friendship to you because of his love for you. Jesus, bless this meal. Bless my friends. Bless this time. Lord, help us. In Jesus' name, amen.