

Through Friendship: Bringing One Another to Jesus

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[0 : 00] All right, good morning, everybody. Hope you're doing well. So good to be with you today. My name is Elliot. I'm one of the pastors here. And so for everybody in the room and those listening online, such a pleasure to be with you as we conclude our series that we started the year with called The Way.

So the early Christians weren't called Christians. They were called followers of the way, kind of giving us an idea that how they were defined was by the way they live.

That's how people knew that they were disciples of Jesus. And so we've just been trying to open up this year, stepping into some of those practices. And so today we're going to talk about how we walk together as Jesus in our friendships, in our community.

So previous weeks we've talked about what that might look like in solitude and in the desert of how we go to God in that furnace. Last week Jesse told us how this church gathering is kind of the buffet table of all of the gifts that the Spirit gives and brings together.

And hopefully some of you prayed into that this week and are here hoping to bring whatever offering you've got. God uses all of that for everybody here. And so today we're going to talk about what that looks like in our friendships together, how we walk through life together, what responsibilities do we have to each other.

[1 : 23] One of the consistent themes throughout the New Testament is that following Jesus is meant to be done in community. And I think it's really illustrative in some of the moments that seem like they would be the most isolating moments for your faith, right?

Like when people are in prison or when people are persecuted and there's literally no one around you, you can still see people reaching out to be a part of that community. Like we have a big chunk of the New Testament because some of the early followers of Jesus, some of the early leaders were reaching out through the written word to still encourage one another, love one another, be together.

And so you look at how you walk with Jesus, there's no community-less way to do that. Like there's always a gathering of people.

But there are some honest challenges to this, right? Like there are some barriers you have to get through. Some of it is just kind of base level like individualism and selfishness.

And that doesn't mean that each person's not created unique and with special things that God's given you. But there's a level where it's just like I'm going to have as much of my way as possible. And if you've ever been in any relationship, any friendship, like you just can't have all that you want all the time.

[2 : 42] That's not a relationship. That's you just dictating life. Busyness, shallow relationships. Sometimes the barrier is we've done the relationship thing before and it hurts.

Like it left you with some trauma. And so it's scary to move back into that. And when you start thinking about those barriers, you kind of get to the place where it feels like maybe it's just easier for yourself, for your family to kind of go it alone, right?

Like it's safer to have acquaintances than friends. Like it's safer just to have people at a surface level and it feels like that. But while there's this, I would say this, while there's a certain perceived safety to that, right?

Like if you don't open yourself up, you won't get hurt. And maybe there's even kind of a romanticism we have about sort of the lone wolf, the lone ranger. The truth about the way of the lone ranger is this.

Lone rangers are dead rangers. And that's a phrase that they've used at One Harbor long since before I've got here.

[3 : 48] And it is a bit stark. But I actually like it a lot because I really think it gets to the heart of this idea of like why do we talk about community so much? Why is it so core to what we do?

Because it's a life or death issue. If you are operating outside of a community of believers, you are such an easier target for your own sin to grab up and take you out.

You are such an easier target for Satan to render you completely ineffective in doing anything to push back darkness, to kind of cut you off, make you feel isolated.

And so it's crucial. Like it is a life or death issue. But it's also the place where Jesus, through other people, does a lot of the shaping of who we are.

Like a lot of the discipleship. And it's also one of the places where we receive a lot of his blessing through the hands and feet of the people that are church around us. So today we're going to look at what the way of Jesus looks like in our friendships.

[4 : 48] And one of the things you're going to see as we go through today, you're going to see this phrase come up over and over. And that's the phrase, one another. Like the Bible is literally full of this phrase of how we are to be, how we are to respond, what we are to do with one another.

I mean the sheer volume, like if you were to go and like Google like how many times that shows up in the Bible, right? You would be amazed at just how many times that phrase is going to pop up.

So you're going to see it in the verses. You're going to see it in the notes. Like everything that comes up, it's about one another. So with that, let's just kind of open with the general backdrop, right?

Followers of Jesus love one another. In John chapter 13, Jesus says, by this all people will know that you're my disciples if you have love for one another.

So this is a place probably to pause and note that thing where like in different languages, so in English in particular, the word love has this incredible breadth of things it can mean, right?

[5 : 52] So you say like, man, I love pizza. And then you also say like, man, I love my wife. And hopefully you mean slightly different things by those, you know, saying those two things, right? So there's like a scope of this.

And I think that's important because when we think about how we love other people and how that demonstrates Christ, there's kind of a version of friendship that looks like just hanging out together, right?

Like good times with good acquaintances, right? Sharing common moments in community with other people. And there's nothing wrong with that. That is part of the glory and the beauty of what God's put in the world to just fellowship with other people, both believers and non-believers, to like share common bonds, right?

But if that's the only level we operate at, you're missing a big piece of what God wants us to do through friendship together, right?

So this particular word love in the Bible means something a lot more like a love that goes to your core, sort of a settled determination that you're going to seek the good of others, like a steadfastness and faithful devotion that really mirrors how God feels about us.

[7 : 05] Like that's when he says people are going to know you by your love, that's it. Not just by like you guys hang out and you have a good time together. Everybody does that, right? But you have this settled devotion that seeks ways to love the people around you like that.

So what would that look like? If we were going to love like that, what would that look like? Well, here's where the one another start, right? So followers of Jesus care for one another.

So just reading through a couple of passages here. So in Corinthians, we are told to comfort one another. Galatians, we are told to bear one another's burdens.

Ephesians, we are told to be kind to each other, forgiving one another. And Romans, contribute to the needs of each other. Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

All throughout scripture, we give this thing of how we're supposed to care about one another. And sort of the overarching idea there is that this is love in action. It is not a passive care we give.

[8 : 07] Like we can't walk by the people we're connected to and see them and not engage with them. It's not just we're with you in the good times. It's I'm willing to get down in whatever mud, whatever muck you're in, and I'm willing to take some of that burden in my life to pull you out of it.

And honestly, that's the kind of friendship we would hope for ourselves, right? Like if you're stuck down in something like that, you would want somebody to come along, not indifferently, like knowing it's going to be a burden to them, but say, I got you.

I've got you. And that's the kind of friendships we're striving for. So we care for one another. It's not indifferent. It's not passive. Another simple thing we do is that followers of Jesus do life together.

It's why every week we're so passionate about we gather in homes. We eat together. Sidebar, if you are interested in, if you wanted to do an interesting Bible study, go and take a look at the way Jesus uses the table throughout his entire ministry.

Like look at how he engages followers, non-followers, people who are close and far through the table, through eating, through like that fellowship.

[9 : 19] That's a fun study to do to see how Jesus kind of does along his way being with people. We do, you know, kind of have some mandatory fun around here, right? And like, you know, if you're like in a corporate setting, that's all right, great, you know, mandatory fun.

But what we mean by that is like we're going to take time, like you can't grow together if you don't be together, right? And so it's just really important that we are together.

And so these aren't always just, it's not just like an academic Bible study. Like we take time just to be together. And that's a really important aspect. Another thing is followers of Jesus get along with one another.

And depending on your experience, you may have seen this or not seen it. But at a very base level, followers of Jesus are supposed to be able to move together in unity, to push back on division, to work against gossip.

Now, I'll pause real quick here to say it's probably worth noting that there are many times within a church context, and particularly sometimes this happens with leadership, where somebody will use Scripture's admonition to not gossip as sort of a way to cover up something, right?

[10 : 34] Like to beat back somebody saying something. It's just, it's a way to get everybody to be quiet. Like that's not what we're talking about. Like that kind of stuff, like a friendship, a community, a place of unity can have accountability, that kind of thing.

It also doesn't mean we have to agree on everything. That's impossible. And the fact that God made us all different and unique suggests to me that's going to be part of how we move together.

Like we don't have to agree on everything. But at a fundamental level, we are on the same team. We are fighting for each other and fighting for the people who don't know Jesus around us.

And you can't do that if you are slinging darts at each other behind each other's backs. Like you just can't do it. And so we fight for unity.

Again, in the Scriptures it says, Be at peace with one another. Live in harmony with one another. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

[11 : 32] Like there's a deference that you give out of reverence for Christ. Clothe yourselves with humility towards one another. Outdo one another in showing honor.

Like literally the thing we should be trying to one up is, No, I'm going to make you feel better than you made me feel. And not for like some selfish guilty reason, but because you just get joy. Like you feel the Father's pleasure in being a part of that.

We aim for restoration. We comfort one another. We live in peace. Again, all throughout Scripture, not something that's given to us as an option.

Right? Like there are challenges to it, but we are called to move together into unity and to constantly be working towards that. Followers of Jesus get along with each other.

Followers of Jesus are also emotionally present with each other. So here's a verse from Romans, chapter 12, verse 15. It says this, Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

[12 : 37] So let's just pause and think about that for a second. Because honestly, I think that's the kind of verse that you read and you go, Oh, that's pretty simple. I got that. Right? Like when your friends are going through good things, you come and, you know, you throw them a shower.

Or you're there with them at the party and you're enjoying it. Or if they're going through something bad, you comfort them and you say, Yeah, like I'm here with you. And that's a piece of it. Right?

But you tend to think of it on that level and then just kind of forget about it. Right? Like you kind of read it and say, I've got it. But here's kind of the question to ask yourself about that verse.

How do you really feel when someone who is your friend, like somebody who's been your friend and you're starting to learn things about them, you've known them for a while, and then you find out they make a lot more money than you do?

Like what's your first reaction? Or like that thing, you know, where like you've known somebody and you're like connecting with them and you kind of feel like, yeah, this couple's kind of like us. You know, we're sort of in the same boat.

[13 : 36] And then like you get invited over their house and like when you're driving there, you kind of like see what neighborhood you're turning into and you're like, what is this? And like you get to their house and you're like, this is a way nicer house than we live in.

You know, right? And all of a sudden there's a piece of you that kind of shrinks a little bit and goes like, man, I thought we were kind of like, apparently they're elevated, you know. Or you're on a team or you're at work and like you're friends with somebody and like their skills or whatever, like they start moving up a little faster.

Like what's your first inclination? Is it, man, I'm really, really excited that they're being elevated over me, that they're my boss now. Or like, you know, the classic situation, like you've got a friend and like they start dating somebody and like that person is just like amazing, right?

Like they're engaging and attractive and such a good fit and they spend all their time with them and it's like you don't have anybody, right? Like, again, it's the first inclination, I'm rejoicing with you.

It's just a question to ask. Like I think this is something God sows into our lives in different measures. But when you get down to it, Scott Salls has this quote where he says, envy and jealousy, like when you let those things seep in, it is actually put you in the place of the exact opposite of the verse, right?

[14 : 57] Because when you are envious or when you feel self-conscious or insecure and you let that be what guides you, what dominates the situation, you actually start rejoicing when people are weeping and weeping when people are rejoicing, right?

Like when they start failing, there's a part of you that kind of feels like, all right, you know, they're not as all so perfect as like I thought they were. It's good to see they got cracks as well, right? Or when somebody else is, you know, when somebody else is rejoicing, you kind of weep because again, you're just feeling sorry for yourself, right?

It's something we got to push back on. The good thing about being a follower of Jesus though is he kind of gives us the ultimate ammunition in this to fight back about it because really the way you get out of envy is to realize this.

You have everything you need in Jesus. Like there is nothing he is denying you. Like he is not giving you his second best, right? And so you can trust him when somebody else appears to get more than you.

You can trust God to be the just judge. You can trust him as far as you're concerned that he, as you follow him, will give you exactly what you need. Like you can be confident in that, right?

[16 : 10] Because at the end of the day, we are all just reflecting the glory of the Father, right? Like you can rest in that relationship. So followers of Jesus can be emotionally present with each other because we lean on Jesus and not on our own insecurities, not how we feel about the situation.

Followers of Jesus also spur each other to be more like Jesus. Hebrews says, let us consider how we stir one another up to love and good works.

A lot of following Jesus, like the goal of that life is not simply to become like a nicer person, right? Like just to be nicer in different situations. Like being nicer in certain ways is how Jesus might lead you.

But the end goal is to be more like Jesus, which means to engage the world in kind of a whole-orbed way. And that's what we do. Like we stir each other up, we encourage each other.

Another way the Bible speaks about this is like we sharpen each other, right? So two verses from Proverbs, which imply a little friction. In Proverbs, it says, faithful are the wounds of a friend, but profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

[17 : 21] And then in another place it says, and you've probably heard this one before, as iron sharpens iron, one man sharpens another. Now something to be said about those things. There is certainly an implied friction there, right?

Like that means there are going to be some places that create uncomfortability. But I would like to note out of the beginning, neither of those, again, give you a green light to just be mean or harsh in somebody's life, to jump in and correct everything.

Like what this is talking about is courageous honesty in the context of like a demonstrated relationship of love, right?

So like maybe another way to say it is, if you don't know someone at all, it is quite possible you are not the iron that's been sent there to sharpen them. Like that's, like you're probably not the one to drive like the heavy truckload of truth over the relational bridge.

Like maybe wait till like you've shown them you love them a little bit there. But it does mean, being a follower of Jesus means there are people, you have people in your life who are in your corner enough that they can say something to you that you might not want to hear.

[18 : 29] And you trust them and love them enough that you're not going to cut them out of life. Like you'll hear it from them because you know that this person has my back. Like if they're saying it, it is because they love me and they want me to see it.

And that's a question you need to ask yourself again is like, who in your life has got your back like that? I mean, can you name them? Can that name pop up in your head? Because if you can't, that's a problem.

And that's part of what we do as believers as a community together is we seek to be that for each other, to have the kind of relationships where somebody can speak into a blind spot of mine and my first reaction is not to just break relationship with them, but to go, yeah, thank you.

We draw each other to Jesus. Another way we do that together is by encouraging each other to stay away from sin.

Part of that is confessing sins to each other, right? And a lot of times when you think about confessing, like the primary thing there is not you stay away from sin because of like sort of like the walk of shame to go tell people that you sinned.

[19 : 44] And so like you don't want to sin just because, you know, you're going to have to tell somebody, right? Like certainly there's a piece of accountability that is moving together as a team and not wanting to let the team down and, you know, understanding that.

But the bigger thing is like what we do together is like when somebody comes to us and you confess, you're like literally sort of disrobing metaphorically speaking and just in the nakedness of who you are saying here's my bad stuff.

And the people around you get to clothe you in Christ and remind you that that sin is not who you are. Like they get to call you back. That's what they do is they put their arms around you and say come back into the community, right?

Like we confess and pray for each other so that we can be healed. Our sin loses its sting because we're reminded our Savior is greater. And you can't always do that in your head because when you sin, it's always like a traffic accident and there's all these people rushing to the scene and one of the things that always rushes to the scene is Satan saying, see that thing you did?

That's what you are. And we need the people around us to remind us, no, to call you back to the one who's redeemed you. Part of following Jesus is also bringing each other to Jesus.

[20 : 59] So there's this famous story in Luke where Jesus is at a house he's staying at and it says that the power of God was available for healing, right?

So he's at this house and because, and it's just like it was today, right? Like it's not just a good sermon's going like, like word has gotten out. Like if we were having a service and it became apparent the power of God was here to like heal people of things that they can't be healed of and that word got out, people would start coming.

And so like if you imagine this building, like if we, if like Jesus was over here and like we had these doors up and like literally every, every piece of sidewalk out there you see was like filled with people, right?

Like you can't get into the building, right? And so there's a group of friends who have a friend, when they hear about this, he's, he's got a physical, he's physically paralyzed.

And they're like, we got to get him to Jesus. And so they carry him down there and they, like, they can't see any way in. So what they do is like the, like a lot of houses in that time had kind of a flat roof.

[22 : 01] And so there was typically a way to get onto that. And so like they carry this guy on, on his mat up to the roof and like start taking the tiles apart to lower him down to Jesus, right? It says this in Luke chapter five, kind of describing that.

And behold, some men were bringing on a bed, a man who was paralyzed and they were seeking to bring him in and laying him before Jesus, but finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd.

They went up on the roof and they let him down in his bed through the tiles before Jesus. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said, man, your sins are forgiven you.

And then immediately after that, he heals him of his physical oppression. And the beautiful thing about that story is Jesus commends, like the faith of those friends were critical in this story, right?

Like they weren't going to let that obstacle get in their way. This guy needed to get to Jesus, but there was a burden, like there was a boulder in his life that he couldn't move. He needed someone else to carry that burden.

[23 : 05] And that's part of what we do is, is we bring each other to Jesus. Kind of like we just talked about, like we call each other back to Jesus when we can't do it ourselves, right?

When whatever is clouding our view, our mind, like we call each other back to Jesus. So these friends recognized what their friend needed most was Jesus.

And that's what we do with each other. It's kind of what we do with the world around us too, right? So I think the simplest version of this is bringing people to Jesus, is followers of Jesus are willing to talk about Jesus, right?

I heard a pastor in an urban setting say one time, and I think it's right, that a lot of the times we kind of let the bounds of our faith be guided by whatever secular context we're in, like whatever is comfortable, right?

But if you think about like your place of work, your extended family, like your circle of friends that are outside of the church, if nobody knows that you're a Jesus follower, that's probably a problem, right?

[24 : 09] And again, that doesn't mean like if I went to work, so I'm married, and if I go to work for say three years and no one knows I'm married, that's probably a problem, right?

And that doesn't even mean like I'm walking around every day like, hey, I'm married. You know I'm married? Did you know I'm married? Married. You know, like that kind of thing. It doesn't mean I'm engaging like that. It just means like even if I'm a private-ish kind of person, like it's going to come up, right?

Like maybe they'll see the ring I'm wearing, or maybe I'm talking about what I'm doing with my wife that weekend. Like I'm just not, like if I'm afraid to talk about the fact that I have a wife, problem.

Like I'm letting something else I'm afraid of break in there. In the late 1900s, there was a Christian rock group called DC Talk.

Yeah, I'm going to throw us in the 1990s Christian rock scene for a second, so just hang on for the ride. They had a song with very simple lyrics that said this, Well, what will people think when they hear I'm a Jesus freak?

[25 : 11] What will they do when they find out it's true? I don't really care if they know that I'm a Jesus freak. There ain't no denying the truth. Part of how you walk, part of how you bring other people to Jesus is you're just unafraid to talk about him.

And that doesn't mean you're necessarily standing on the side with a sign. It doesn't mean whatever thing, but it does mean eventually being a follower of Jesus is going to create an uncomfortable situation.

It's going to cost you more than you want it to cost you. But that's part of how we bear the burdens for other people. And so we carried each other to Jesus by calling each other back to him.

We carry each other to Jesus by being willing to talk about Jesus. But here, again, is the comforting part. We don't do any of that alone. Like, you're going to hit some uncomfortable situations, but the family of God, the very living spirit of God is with you.

Like, that's his promise is I'm not going to leave you. We've got the power to do it. And the world needs it. And lastly, so as we're kind of thinking about the end of this series, like, or particularly with friends, so maybe there's a part of you that's still kind of back at the beginning and goes, yeah, but I have tried this community thing.

[26 : 37] And, man, it goes sideways a lot of times. Like, the deepest wounds I have are from trying this and somebody letting me down. And that's a really important place.

And there's things you need to do to walk through that. But one of the things we need to say when you're moving in with your friendships, like, one of the things you kind of need to have in your bag is just to realize this.

Followers of Jesus know that their friends aren't Jesus. Like, we give each other that grace. Like, it is great when you have a group of friends around you that notice you, that are pushing you to Jesus, that celebrate the gifts he's given you, that make you feel loved, that connect with you in your dark places.

But what about when they don't? Jesus experienced this. One of the best chapters for this is Luke 22. We won't read through the whole verse, but let me just give you, like, a two-minute run through Luke 22.

Here's what happens in Luke verse 22. So right out of the gate, Jesus has a friend who's been his friend for several years, right? And, again, I think a lot of times we forget. Like, we just think, like, Judas was out here.

[27 : 46] Like, Judas was part of the 12. Like, he was going around with him. He was a friend of Jesus. And right at the beginning, it says that one of his friends, one of his closest friends, betrays him. And not, like, betrays him, like says something on Facebook, betrays him, like sets him up to get killed, right?

And it says that that betrayal is so complete that it, like, like Judas so opens himself up to that darkness that it literally says Satan enters into him.

Like, if you are that far gone, like that is a complete betrayal. A few verses later, Jesus is having the Last Supper, which is this critical, sacred moment that he has looked forward to with his disciples, where he's talking to them about what's about to happen.

And, like, there's so much in that. We talk about it every week when we do communion. One of the things we miss is, like, immediately after the communion's over, his friends start arguing.

Like, they start an argument at that table, right? I mean, if Jesus had Twitter, I'm sure he would just, like, you know, post out, like, a face palm emoji or something, right? Like, literally this moment he's been waiting for.

[28 : 51] Immediately after that, he goes out, and Peter makes all these grand promises about how he's gonna stand up for him that he can't keep. A few verses later, Jesus is over in the garden praying, intensely praying, for, like, the darkest moment of his life, everything he's come to bear.

And, like, we're supposed to, he wants his friends there with him, and he asks, can you guys hang out and pray with me? And they don't understand, and they're weak in their flesh, and they just, they keep falling asleep.

And again, we kind of identify that with, like, the weakness of the friends. But again, think about Jesus. Like, think about if you had this really critical moment, and you're like, man, this is like, I'm going through this thing. Can you be there for me? And, like, somebody just flakes.

And it says, even through that, he loves them. Then they come to arrest him, right? And Jesus has been teaching them for years about how we don't fight like the world, and we don't engage. But as soon as the danger shows up, Peter's all like, come at me, bro, you know, and, like, takes his sword out, and starts cutting people.

And Jesus is like, no, no. And then a short time later, the one a lot of people know is, like, Peter, who's made all these professions, at the testimony of a child, he just bails.

[30 : 06] He, like, backs it. Like, the most critical moment. This isn't even, like, weakness. He just bails. Jesus knows what it feels like when people let you down.

He feels that. But Jesus is not those, he is not those people. Proverbs says, a man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

That is an apt description of who Jesus is. It is awesome to have Christian friends. It is awesome to have the community of believers. But every friend, in some measure, even the closest ones, will eventually let them down, and you're going to have to have the grace for that.

Because putting expectations on your friends to be Jesus will crush you and will crush the relationship. You cannot ask your spouse. You cannot ask your family.

You cannot ask your friends to be Jesus for them. That is too much to ask. We should seek those friendships. We should earnestly move towards them. But Jesus is the perfect friend.

[31 : 13] And when we find that connection with him, it really opens up, it really unlocks the rest of it. So as the band comes up today, a couple of simple responses here.

So if you're not a follower of Jesus, I just want to say to you, like I know the world, I know friendships out there are complicated and can be a cruel place. It can leave you wounded.

Jesus is the friend whose arms is open wide. Like he is not looking at all that. Like if you need healing and you don't know how to find it, his arms are open wide. If you're confused, if you're desperate, if you just want to come and say, I don't believe you're real.

If you're real, show me you're real. He is receptive to all of that. Like he will meet you in that place. He will help you. He bore that debt.

He took that on so you don't have to. If you want to know about that, why don't you just come down front afterwards and pray with somebody. Or just right where you are, why don't you just ask him, Jesus, like I want that from you.

[32 : 19] If you are a follower of Jesus, what is it that stood out in your heart today? Maybe as we were going through this, like the spirit laid on your heart, like maybe just out of nowhere, a particular person popped in your mind and you were like, I want to show love to that person.

Maybe that's something you want to follow him in, right? Maybe you realized you don't have people that have your back like that and you realize I am going to be a dead ranger if I don't get in on that. That's available.

One of the things I was thinking about this morning, maybe some of you are even a simple thing like the fact that Jesus was in a place and healing was available and you're like, I've never seen anything like that.

Maybe you just want to come and pray, Jesus, would that your power was available to us like that. Like would that I would see more of that. It's appropriate to pray to God, I am not content with what I've seen of you.

I want to see more. If this is real, I want to see more. Maybe you want to learn how to do this in community. We've been talking about the Sharing Jesus Together journal. Like man, we've already seen some people have life-changing moments to that by just like gathering in huddles and like talking about what you see in each other's lives in scripture.

[33 : 33] That's available to you. Come and talk to someone about that. And as we close this series, remember it's a journey. Like more and more, more and more.

Jesus is gracious. Jesus is gracious.