

Jesus- Friendship

I would guess that by far most of you are here today, or have been in the church and in Christ for some time, because a friend or loved one first invited you, or even better, brought you to church or a church related event like Vacation Bible School, youth camp, or a revival.

I was introduced to Jesus and His church by my mom at a very early age. My mom brought me to church throughout my childhood and teen years and it was through my mom's and some very faithful, godly Sunday school teachers that I came to Christ for salvation at age 12. Then, it was at about age 20 or 21 that a really good friend was extremely influential in my realizing the call to the ministry. What about you? What's your story?

Friends can persuade us to do just about anything. That's why choosing the right friends is one of the most important life decisions you will ever make. The right friends can encourage and inspire you to reach the highest of your life potential and the wrong friends can lead you down paths of failure and complete self-destruction.

True friendship fulfills one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of all human needs, the need to be loved and accepted. Though it is only through a deeply committed relationship with God that these needs can be completely fulfilled, the right friends can play a key role in that happening.

What can we learn about friendship from the life and teaching of Jesus? In all of the life of Jesus I can't think of any event that

reveals the character and qualities of friendship more than that of the paralytic and his friends.

17 On one of those days while He was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea, and also from Jerusalem. And the Lord's power to heal was in Him. **18** Just then some men came, carrying on a stretcher a man who was paralyzed. They tried to bring him in and set him down before Him. **19** Since they could not find a way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on the stretcher through the roof tiles into the middle of the crowd before Jesus. **20** Seeing their faith He said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you." Luke 5:17-20 (HCSB) Walked out healed and forgiven. Friends on the roof???

True friends:

1. Faithful despite "issues" or differences. This man could have recently fallen ill or been injured or could have been born with an incurable malady that caused his paralysis. But, in spite of his "issues" he had friends who stuck by him, cared for him and took a chance bringing him to Jesus.

How picky, how judgmental are most people today when it comes to choosing their friends? People are so superficial. They will reject a person because of race, handicap, or physical appearance, then attempt to befriend someone who is abusive

and mean-spirited just because they fit into a certain expectation of what a “good friend” should be like.

True friendships often break the mold. Fox and the Hound.

Video **Fox and the Hound- Best of Friends** 4:30 (run 1st 2:35 then fade)

2. Bring friends to Jesus- We could easily spend the rest of the hour talking about the qualities of a good friendship- loyalty, honesty, sacrifice, faithful, available, understanding, listening, etc. But there is nothing in all the world that a friend could possibly do for a friend that is more important, valuable and life-changing for the good than bringing that friend to Jesus. If you consider yourself a friend to anyone, there is nothing, absolutely nothing that is more important than bringing your friend to Jesus or there is nothing better a friend could do for you than to be introduced to Jesus by your friend.

No one can force anyone to come to Christ, but true friends at least try. We each must choose whether to become a follower of Christ or not. If you have a friend, neighbor or family member who is not a Christian, I urge to consider this fictional dramatic presentation.....

Video Youtube A Letter from Hell 6:48 (run 1st 5:26 then fade)

3. Creative/persistent- The faith and creative persistence of this man’s friends in getting their friend into the presence of Jesus led

to his healing, forgiveness and salvation. We don't know if the ill friend was even initially interested or willing. They may have started out taking him to that house against his own will. But things definitely began to change for the good as they all came into the presence of Jesus.

Jesus, "Seeing their faith" -included the faith of the friends. Of course for the man to have been truly transformed into a follower of Christ he had to believe too. But this was a matter of corporate faith. To say the least, these friends were instrumental in getting their friend into the presence of Jesus, his healing, and coming to receive forgiveness of his sins, and his salvation. Wouldn't you like to have friends like these?

Let's talk now about One Who demonstrated an even greater act of friendship and that act of friendship should impact every human being in this place and way beyond this finite group assembled here this morning.

Scenario: Jesus was assembled with His disciples in the upper room for the last Passover meal the evening before His crucifixion. After the meal and the institution of the "Lord's Supper," He went around the table washing the disciples feet. He explained that this was how they were to serve one another. Then He began to give them some final instruction.

11 "I have spoken these things to you so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. **12** This is My command: love one another as I have loved you. **13** No one has greater love than this, that someone would lay

down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are My friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I do not call you slaves anymore, because a slave doesn't know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from My Father. ¹⁶ You did not choose Me, but I chose you. I appointed you that you should go out and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you. ¹⁷ This is what I command you: love one another. John 15:11-17 (HCSB)

Jesus your friend: (is or wants to be)

1. Offers you joy even here and how. Yes, His primary purpose in coming to earth and dying on the cross was to make it possible for those who trust in Him to have a relationship with God forever in heaven. But He fully intends for the benefits and blessings of that relationship to begin here and now.

I have come that they may have life and have it in abundance. John 10:10b (HCSB)

Earthly friendships, as close and wonderful as they may sometimes be will disappoint and even sometimes hurt you, but Jesus will never forsake or forget you. A relationship with Him offers you joy and abundant life even in all this craziness that's going on around you.

⁵ for He Himself has said, **I will never leave you or forsake you.**^[3] Heb 13:5b (HCSB)

2. Set the standard for friendship. He said “**Love one another as I have loved you.**” How has Jesus loved you? **13 No one has greater love than this, that someone would lay down his life for his friends.** Jesus demonstrated/He proved His love for us, even though we were still sinners separated from God, unlovely, selfish, mean, unholy, and unworthy, by willingly dying on the cross in order bear the punishment for our sins so we could be reconciled with God and become His friend and child.

21 And you were once alienated and hostile in mind because of your evil actions. **22** But now He has reconciled you by His physical body through His death, to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before Him— **Col 1:21-22 (HCSB)**

Jesus has not only taught you and showed you how to be a good friend, He clearly has gone to extreme measures to befriend you. He not only wants you to experience good, wholesome, positive friendships, He wants to be your friend. He has already taken the first giant step to initiate a relationship with you, all you have to do is respond in faith to His offer.

One more scenario: Jesus was crucified. Early on n Sunday morning, some of the women went to the tomb with spices to anoint the body of Jesus. They were concerned about how they would be able to move the huge stone away from the opening that had been placed there. When they arrived they immediately noticed that the stone had already been rolled away. Upon entering the tomb, they

saw a young man sitting on the right side. They were obviously alarmed and amazed.

6 “Don’t be alarmed,” he told them. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has been resurrected! He is not here! See the place where they put Him. **7** But go, tell His disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see Him there just as He told you.’ ” **Mark 16:6-7 (HCSB)**

Why do you suppose the angel told the women to tell the disciples but also specifically Peter? Peter’s last words in the presence of Jesus were cursing and “I don’t know this man you are talking about.” Jesus’ message through the angel was “I forgive you.” Even though Peter had sworn the night before that he would die for Jesus then denied Him three times. Jesus forgave Him..... Jesus offers you forgiveness. He wants to be your friend.....

3. Offers forgiveness to you. Whatever despicable things you have done, He offers forgiveness. There is no depth or breadth of sin that His blood, body, suffering and death cannot reach, cleanse, heal and forgive.

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **1**John 1:8-9 (HCSB)

Would you like to be forgiven of all your sins? Would you like to be loved in way that you never even imagined? Would you like to become a friend of Jesus?