

FRIENDED

Series: Friend-ing & Unfriend-ing, Pt 2 February 9, 2020 ser3910

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(Video of Youth retreat)

Good morning church family. We continue our “Friend-ing & UnFriend-ing” series on relationships.

We are going to look at friendships from God’s perspective.

I am so excited that some of our young people are going to help me preach this message today! Would you give a warm welcome to some members of Gloucester County Community Church’s amazing Youth Group?

The title of our message today is “Friended.”

Before we get started, I want our youth group friends to introduce themselves. (Teens introduce themselves)

(Video 1)

We just showed you a video of our recent youth retreat. Last month we took the teens on a retreat in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. As you can see, we had the best time! There was a rope course, rock climbing, and a zip line. There were so many fun things to do. But what we loved most about it was all that God did in those short three days of our lives. Friendships were nurtured and more importantly, new friendships with God were made that weekend.

We had seven teens make decisions to give their hearts and their lives to Jesus Christ.

We had ten plus teens recommit to live their lives for Jesus Christ.

That's what the focus of our message is today. As followers of Jesus Christ, what are the qualities we look for in a friend?

Let us pray.

It is important to have friends who share our faith and friends who love and follow Jesus. Not religious friends, rather friends who love Jesus.

These are the teens you see on stage. I couldn't fit our entire youth group up here, and I wanted some other amazing teens to share in this message today as well. Therefore, we have a short video with a simple question we should all ask ourselves. What are the qualities we look for in a friendship?

Let's take a look.

(Video 2) (Teen & Qualities of friendship)

We've heard the answers our teens have shared. Now I want to ask you, church family, are their answers any different than yours or mine? We all want the same things in a friendship.

Trust, loyalty, honesty.

Do you have those friendships?

Let's talk to my panel of distinguished guests.

Questions:

(Slide 1)

Why is it important to have friends who love Jesus and live for him?

(Slide 2)

Do you consider Jesus as your personal friend? Why?

(Slide 3)

How did your friends help you get closer to Jesus on the weekend retreat?

Awesome stories.

We just heard how our teens see Jesus. He is their best friend. He is there for them when no one else is. When they feel alone, they know that they were created in the image of God and that their purpose is to know Jesus and His love for them. To walk in that purpose is to know Jesus will never leave them or forsake them. What a powerful way to live at such a young age!

We know what a great friend Jesus is to us. There is no greater friend than Jesus.

John 15:13-15

13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

Wait a minute, who is Jesus' father? The God of the Universe, the God who made the heavens and the earth, the God who put all the stars in the sky. Jesus is going to make known to us what He learns from His father. Can you all get excited with me on this one? Can we all give a Praise Shout to Jesus being our friend right now?

We know without a doubt what kind of friend Jesus is. There is no greater friend than who Jesus is to us.

My question to you and to me is this, are we a friend to Jesus?

"You are my friends if you do what I command"

What does Jesus command?

John 15:12 "This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you."

Can we do that?

If you are like me, sometimes we get caught up in expectations of others we consider our friends. Even with God, we focus sometimes on all He can do for us and when God doesn't do what we think He should do, do we automatically think He is failing us and that God is not being our friend? That couldn't be further from the truth!

God showed me this in my relationship with my husband, John. Whenever I would get angry with John, I would say, "You aren't my friend, John. Why can't you just be my friend?"

Sometimes we are the meanest to the people who are the closest to us, right? I'll give you an example.

There was this day that John and I were arguing about something. I honestly can't even remember what it was about, but I was so upset with him! He was angry with me, too and neither of us was budging.

We are both very passionate and stubborn. It happened to be my birthday, and we were going out to dinner with our kids to celebrate. I was so angry that I called my daughter Lizzie and I said "I'm canceling dinner tonight." I told her, "Daddy is really getting on my nerves and I don't want to go out anymore." So, Lizzie in all her Godly wisdom says, "Oh Mom, we should still all go out to dinner and you should just not sit near Daddy." She said this because she really wanted to go out. I told her no I am not going out with miserable people.

I hung up the phone and I went into the bathroom. I was cleaning the counter, putting my makeup away when I heard the Holy Spirit say to me, "Two words Gina, two words."

I said, "No Lord," because I knew what those two words are, and I didn't want to say them. I finally gave in. Jesus always wins. I walked out and I looked at John who was looking arrogant and miserable to me. I sat down next to him and said, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry." His whole countenance changed within a second. Tears filled up in John's eyes, and He said, "I'm sorry, too. I don't want to fight with you, I love you." Jesus always wins!

I went downstairs and Ashley, my daughter was sitting at the table. I told her, "I just punched Satan in the stomach." Her reply was, "What? You punched Daddy in the stomach?" I said, "NO! I punched Satan in the stomach!"

When we are humble and forgiving, the devil doesn't get to win people! Humility is punching the devil in the stomach. Remember that! I went out to dinner with my family that night and I even sat next to John.

I was so worried about John being my friend while I was not being a friend to John. We are so concerned with Jesus being our friend and what he can do for us but many times we forget to be His friend.

Let's look at two of Jesus' very good friends, Martha and Mary.

Luke 10:38-42

38) As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 39) She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said.

40) But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

41) "Martha, Martha" the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42) but few things are needed- or indeed only one. Mary has chosen the better and it will not be taken away from her.

Who is the better friend to Jesus? Who is actually spending more time with Jesus? What does Jesus say?

"What Mary has will not be taken from her."

Mary is listening to Jesus. Sitting at his feet. Friendships take time. Time spent with one another.

Jesus wants your time with him more than anything else. He wants to build his friendship with you and that takes time! And it takes us to listen to God and not be distracted by so many things.

Is Jesus your very best friend?

Friendened is the name of our message today.

If Jesus had a Facebook, He would have billions of friends and He would have to have a fan page.

But, how many of those friends would stop everything and live for Him? He died for us, people. He wants us to live for Him.

For us to be the kind of friends we need to be, Jesus has to be our very best friend.

Jesus wants to be your best friend.

Are you His friend too?

In John 15:4 He said, "I call you friends if you do what I command." Do we do the things that God wants us to do? Do we want to please God instead of people?

What kind of friend are you to God?

The qualities of a good friend

Humility. A humble friend.

Forgiveness. A forgiving friend.

Trustworthiness. A trustworthy friend.

Encouragement. An encouraging friend.

Prayer. A praying friend.

We want these qualities in a friend, but are these things we offer to others?

Turn the mirror around! We must be this kind of friend and God will bless us with friends who have these qualities, as well.

I love this quote.

"True friends pray bigger things for you than you pray for yourself!"

Speaking of prayer, I want to show you the photo that melted my heart.

(photo of teens praying)

This group of teens who are in the photo are on this platform with me today. This was taken on Saturday night after worship and the message. There was a time to pray and talk with some of the college team who were leaders at the retreat.

It was a time when the Holy Spirit fell on our teens and they experienced His love together, which was amazing. It was such a holy moment that when it came upon them, I wanted to take a picture to remember the moment, but I couldn't take the photo.

I felt like I was intruding on God's moment. I went to the balcony and once more tried to take the photo, but again I couldn't. It was such a holy moment to me. One of our leaders, Michael, took the photo, I saw it when it was posted on Instagram. I was so happy we had a photo of this moment even though I couldn't take it.

(Back to the teens) So, tell us about this photo?

Do you have friends like those in this photo? Friends who will cry with you when you are hurting inside and friends who will take that pain to God with you in prayer? You can.

Why should someone give their lives to Jesus Christ and make Him their very best friend?

(Share Gospel ...ABC)

You may be thinking, I really wish I had a friend like Jesus, but I don't know Jesus the way you speak of Him. You can! He is waiting for you to make that decision today!

In fact, in Revelation 3:20 Jesus says, "Here I am I stand at the door and knock. If anyone who hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person and He with me." That door is the door to your heart.

Jesus wants to be your friend, your very best friend. He died on a cross so you and I could have a relationship with God. He took our place on a cross so we could be forgiven of our sins and have a friendship with God. All He wants is a relationship with you. Right where you are, you don't have to change a thing; Jesus will change it for you. It's as easy as A B C.

A...Admit you are a sinner. We've all done things that are wrong.

B...Believe God sent Jesus in your place and He will forgive all your sins.

C...Commit your life to Jesus. Ask Jesus to live inside of your heart today and be your Lord and Savior!

And D... Do it today. None of us know if we have tomorrow.

Pray this prayer with me...

Dear God, thank you for loving me. I admit I am a sinner and I've done things that are wrong.

I believe you sent Jesus to take my place and die on a cross so I can be forgiven. I know I need a Savior and that is Jesus Christ.

Dear Jesus, please come and live inside of my heart and be my Lord and Personal Savior. I commit my heart and my life to you.

Holy Spirit, help me live my life for Jesus everyday. In Jesus name I pray. Amen!

You now have, in Jesus, your best friend that you will ever know! Spend time in His word and be a best friend to Him, too!