

# Who Are the Friends of Jesus?

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[ 0 : 00 ] So, we're continuing our study of the Gospel of John here this morning. Our passage this morning is John 15, 12-17.

And I'll ask you to turn in your Bibles to that in preparation for our reading of it. If you are using one of these Bibles that the ushers hand out, by the way, if you don't have a Bible here with you, we're happy to provide one for your use here.

Just raise your hands, the ushers will get you a copy. If you are using one of those copies, we're on page 902.

So the setting here, as we've mentioned before as we've studied through this, it is the night before Jesus is to be crucified.

He knows that He's going to die. That's been His purpose all along. To live this perfect life and to die in the place of sinful man.

[ 1 : 06 ] To redeem for Himself a people. To make an ultimate display of His glory in saving undeserving sinners who will respond in faith to Him.

As we've noted before, Jesus is being very purposeful here. He's being very purposeful about using these final moments with His disciples to bring together all the pieces of His teaching so far.

To prepare them for His departure. To prepare them for what will happen. For what will happen to them and what will happen through them.

And we're about halfway through Jesus' teachings in that final evening with His disciples. About halfway through this, this end of the end.

And in these final moments, there begins to be a transition in Jesus' teaching. Jesus begins to direct His teaching to some very specific things that the disciples will need for life beyond His departure from this world.

[ 2 : 17 ] From the earth. From the earth. From the earth. From the earth. From the earth. And this life that they are intended to live. To serve Him. To serve Jesus and carry on His ministry.

After He is no longer physically present with them. Because that's the point of a disciple, right? A disciple was to carry on the teaching and ministry of the Master.

The point of a disciple. So as Jesus finds it important to declare these things to His disciples for their continued ministry. So we, as His disciples, and collectively together, as one of His local churches placed here in Squamish, we need to pay attention to these things.

If they were important for Jesus' disciples then to minister effectively in that time and place, then they must also be for us as we seek to minister effectively for Jesus here in this time and place, here in Squamish at this time.

Now the original intent, if you notice in the bulletin, was to preach the entire passage from verse 12 through 27. And that passage essentially breaks into three sections.

[ 3 : 39 ] Essentially preparing for ministry through understanding who we are as believers. Preparing for ministry in understanding our relationship to the world.

And preparing for ministry in understanding the role of the Holy Spirit. But there's so much here, and so much that is very timely for us as a body.

That I made the decision late yesterday to focus on only the first section. And that's verses 12 through 17 here this morning.

It was either that or a 75-minute sermon. Which would have been a wonderful surprise, particularly for those who minister to the children in junior church, I'm sure.

So our sermon this morning, verses 12 through 17. It should be entitled, Who are the friends of Jesus?

[ 4 : 44 ] Let's read our passage. So John 15, 12 through 17. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Greater love has no one than this. That someone lays down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you.

No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends. For all that I have heard from my Father, I have made known to you.

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide.

So that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

[ 5 : 45 ] So there are several terms used throughout Scripture to describe our relationship to Jesus. We can probably think of a few.

He refers to us as sheep. He refers to us even as brothers and sisters. He says he is not ashamed to call us brothers or mother even.

He calls us children. There are a number of terms that Scripture uses, that God uses to describe us in relationship to him.

Here, as Jesus makes final preparations with his disciples for him to go and for them to carry on in this ministry that he is the foundation of, he calls them friends.

And this is where we get to start. With the statement that the God of the universe is a personal, intimate friend of those who believe in him.

[ 6 : 48 ] Now, if you have been a Christian for any length of time, you have probably heard that before. But perhaps we take that a bit for granted.

But what Jesus is saying here is both very new and it's very different from probably what we think of as friendship.

In the Old Testament, so it's new. In the Old Testament, the one that is referred to as a friend of God was Abraham. Remember? Now, Abraham certainly had a unique and an intimate relationship with God.

And as the father of all Israel, which makes him the father, you know, the lineage of the Messiah, of Jesus. He was used by God for a key role in God's plan to redeem for himself a people.

So as Jesus uses this term friend with his Jewish disciples, he's indicating that there's something very unique, something very intimate, something very personal, something very special going on here.

[ 8 : 03 ] This is not a term he throws around lightly. There's a very special category of relationship that his disciples are in here. Now, in the times in which Jesus is speaking, the friends of a king were his closest companions.

The king would disclose things to his friends that he would not even disclose to his greatest generals. They had access to the king. They had access to him at all times.

Even in the middle of the night. Even in his private chambers. They could be with him whenever they needed to be. They didn't need to be granted access by anyone.

They were entrusted with the most important duties of the kingdom. They had the closest possible relationship to the king.

Such is the nature of the friend. And that's the kind of relationship that Jesus describes here between himself and his disciples.

[ 9 : 16 ] And it's contrasted a bit with the relationship that's based on being a servant or a slave. Now, that's not to say that we, or that Jesus' disciples, aren't rightly his servants.

Just as the friends of the king are not still rightly his subjects, right? That he elevates them to this special position of friendship doesn't mean they're no longer his subjects.

But rather, in the case of Jesus, that he elevates us to this undeserved and intimate relationship of friend.

And having been elevated then to this incredible position, we're then given seven characteristics of those who are Jesus' friends.

What it is that these friends of Jesus look like. Who are they? What do they do? What do they look like? Now, you might note, as we go through these, that no one fully looks like this.

[ 10 : 30 ] No one does these things perfectly, candidly, probably not even close. But Jesus here is setting out the general marks of the believer.

And he does so without getting into exceptions. This is John recording Jesus' teachings here. This is very consistent with the way he teaches. You'll see this again in his letters in 2 and 3 John.

So, he's saying this is what the friends of Jesus look like without addressing here the forgiveness for when we fail to live up to that standard.

Or the sanctification process that is growing us into the likeness of Jesus so that we increasingly look this way. He's simply saying this is what believers look like.

This is what the friends of Jesus look like. This is what the friends of Jesus look like. And much of this is a specific reminder. It's not brand new stuff.

[ 11 : 39 ] It's a reminder of what he has been teaching. But he says it now in these final moments to prepare them for this handoff.

So, what are they? Number one. They love one another just as Jesus has loved them.

Friends of Jesus love the other friends of Jesus. 1 John 5, 1. Again, written by the same writer as the Gospel of John says, Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.

And everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of Him. So, believing that Jesus is the Christ is how you get saved.

That's how you become this friend of Jesus. And it goes hand in hand with loving other friends of Jesus.

[ 12 : 47 ] As Jesus pointed out to the Jewish leaders of his day, There really is no such thing as loving God without loving Jesus. Or loving Jesus without loving God.

And John points out here that there is no such thing as loving Jesus. Without loving others who have been born of God. Other friends of Jesus.

And the friends of Jesus love each other humbly. They love each other fully. They love each other sacrificially with a total giving of oneself.

That's the measure to which Jesus has loved them. And like Jesus, they deny themselves for the benefit of other believers. They care more about what will help others than their own pleasure or their own benefit.

They care whether others are being robbed of the joy of intimate fellowship with Jesus as a result of lingering sin.

[ 13 : 58 ] They desire to see others grow in their knowledge of God and their relationship with Him. It's because a church gathering is much more than something they attend.

And much more of a joyful fellowship. Fellow believers are not mere acquaintances. With which we share some common belief in an auditorium on Sundays.

We are to see other believers as Jesus sees them. them as dearly beloved, precious souls for which we would gladly take their burden upon ourselves, sacrificing everything even to the point, if necessary, of life itself.

I like the way John MacArthur words this. He says, the world over, for all of history, the world has always acknowledged the supreme evidence of love, is when a person would die for the one he loved.

And that's exactly what Jesus is about to do. He loves these disciples. If he doesn't die, they'll spend forever in hell.

[ 15 : 20 ] And so would you, and so would I, and so would everybody else who ever lived because there would be no sacrifice for sin. Jesus knows his death is only a few hours away.

He's not dying for himself. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. He became sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

And so the nature of our love is to be the kind of love that causes us, if need be, to die for another believer.

And it's really important that we get this. Because Jesus said previously in chapter 13 that all men will know that we are Jesus' disciples by the love that we show one another.

This is the way we show who we are. And God demonstrated his love in the person of Jesus.

[ 16 : 33 ] Now that Jesus is no longer on earth, the continued demonstration of God's love is meant to be evident through those who are his friends.

As well as we will see later on in John 15, the rest of the passage that we're not covering quite today. This deep faithful love for one another is God's gift to sustain us when the world responds in hatred to us as we continue Jesus' ministry of declaring the gospel.

Now you might say that you don't feel anything near that kind, that depth of love for others in the church. Because indeed that's a very high standard.

So I'm with you there. But in that case, here's what needs to be done. When we fail, when God sets out his standard, this is the way you should be.

And we look at the mirror of that and say, that's not the way I am. What we need to do is confess to Jesus that we have not been his friend in loving others.

[ 17 : 59 ] Those whom he gave his life for. We need to acknowledge that as sin. We need to repent. We need to turn from that. Then as the previous part of John 15 indicates, we need to abide.

We need to continue on. Live in his love. Just like a branch in a vine. We need to understand the fullness of his love for us.

And our wretchedness. And our wretchedness. Our unlovable-ness. Apart from him. So that love for others.

His love for others. Then wells up. In us. Number two. Second characteristic of what the friends of Jesus look like.

The friends of Jesus follow his commands. Throughout scripture, the evidence that one is a true believer in Jesus is obedience. Now, let's be clear.

[ 19 : 07 ] Obedience to his commands are not how a follower of Jesus earns their friendship with Jesus. Rather, obedience is the visible result that one actually does believe in Jesus.

Obedience is the proof that we are intimately connected with Jesus Christ. And that makes sense. You know, even just logically.

You know, worldly sense. Go back to our example about friends of the king. It makes sense. It wouldn't make sense for those to be true friends of the king to be living life in opposition to his commands.

Or he shared his desires for what he wants to do. And you live in opposition to those. And his purposes. Of the king. This would show that they weren't really friends of the king at all.

It would also be an offense to the king. Since it would display that he really doesn't rule as king. Your obedience.

[ 20 : 18 ] My obedience. Is important to Jesus. It is no trivial matter. Make no mistake, Christian. God both desires and requires your obedience.

He has miraculously saved you. And has elevated you to a position of friendship with God. He has shared with you his plans for the display of his glory in you and in his people.

But he does not want you to trample upon his gracious gift. For us, obedience is how we display or demonstrate our love, our friendship towards him.

For him, it is the display of his glory. For him, it is the display of his glory. Evidenced in the gracious and powerful transformation of the life of the one who was formerly his enemy.

But his enemy would now live out of his glory. His glory is a work that demonstrates the power and the glory of God to the world around us.

[ 21 : 39 ] If we seriously desire to display God's glory to the world around us, we will obey our king. And God's word indicates that this will take nothing less than a complete abandonment of our lives in favor of him.

Now that may seem impossible. In fact, it is in many respects. Except in Christ, of course.

And that is exactly what displays his power to transform sinners like you, like me. The third characteristic.

The friends of Jesus know divine truth. They know divine truth as recipients of Jesus' revelation. So Jesus declares to his friends everything that the Father has revealed.

Nothing is left lacking. Got everything you need. And since Jesus is the truth, all of this revelation is entirely true. It is without any error.

[ 22 : 54 ] So it's complete and it's accurate. This means that when it comes to declaring the things of Jesus to another, the simplest Christian, saved by the grace of God, come to a realization of who he is and his own sinfulness, and falls upon the grace of the Savior, knows more than the highest intellectual.

And he has given us his inspired written word as this complete revelation so that we can continue to grow in our knowledge of him.

John MacArthur puts it this way. Jesus never expected his disciples to be blindly obeying him and just kind of dragging along, cranking it out.

But they were to be his friends. Intimately acquainted with all of his heart's desires, all of his work and all of his missions.

And what a privilege that is. In fact, he even lives his life through us. What marvelous truth. Number four.

[ 24 : 16 ] Jesus chooses his friends. His friends are chosen by him. That we've been chosen by God should blow our minds.

I don't know which one you were, you know, in elementary school when, you know, at recess they picked teams. Were you always the first one chosen?

Maybe you were that last one chosen. Oh, I guess, yeah, we'll take Carl. It's an honor to be chosen. But think through being chosen by God. And not because of anything in us. That the holy God saves some and condemns others.

And that the saved are fully undeserving of being saved. Just like those, no different from those who end up remaining in condemnation.

[ 25 : 30 ] Is an amazing display of the grace of God. And that salvation is rooted in God's work, not ours.

So as Jesus prepares his disciples for his departure. And for their continuing his ministry on earth. He reminds them that they are chosen.

Now maybe for them, this was even specific. Because we know. We know the story as it reads on. We know that they will all abandon him in that fateful hour.

And they would need, as a result, they would need the specific reassurance that they belong to Jesus. Not fundamentally because of what they have done.

But because of his doing. We should take it no less seriously. That our identity as those who have been graciously chosen by God.

[ 26 : 34 ] Is foundational to our preparation for and our continuation in faithful ministry. Ministry service to Jesus Christ, our King.

Our Lord. The King of Kings. The Lord of Lords. Number five. The friends of Jesus are appointed to bear fruit.

It is clear that Jesus has a purpose for his friends. He purposes that his followers produce results for the praise and glory of the one to whom they are connected.

Remember that earlier analogy? See, the previous part of John 15 about the branch and the vine. See, while clearly the fruit sprouts from the branches.

That's the disciples. It's believers. It's us. The fruit is ultimately produced by the vine. That's Jesus. And it is to the vine's glory since the branch can do nothing by itself.

[ 27 : 41 ] It's all about the vine. It's all about Jesus. And as his disciples, it's critical that we understand that God's drawing us into this relationship with him.

And elevating us to this position of friendship. It's not simply for us. We have a divine appointment to carry out.

We have been saved by the gracious power of God for God's specific purposes to be carried out through us and in us.

Ephesians 2.10 says this plainly. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Number six. Regarding the fruit of the friends of Jesus, their fruit abides or continues. There is such purpose to the Christian life.

[ 28 : 56 ] The fruit that is produced by our life-giving connection to Jesus is long-lasting. The fruit of Christ-likeness that is becoming like Jesus brought about by God's work in us has lasting effect.

The good works it produces, including the faithfulness in declaring the gospel message, are actions that affect people's lives forever. However, when you share the gospel with someone and you live a life that lines up with that gospel message, it lines up with your declaration of who this Jesus is and what he seeks to do.

And someone receives Christ. Their eyes are opened as a result. They see Christ. They receive Christ. You have had the privilege of being part of something eternal.

People donate money to have hospitals or other public amenities, trails, etc. You know, named after them so they have a lasting legacy to others. You and I, by way of God making us his friend, get to

be part of changing people's eternal destiny.

Where they are transferred from the kingdom of darkness. Where they are a slave to evil. They're a slave to sin. They're a slave to the evil one, an evil master.

[ 30 : 33 ] To the kingdom of light. Transferred from being enemies of Jesus to becoming his friends. Your life in Christ has eternal significance.

And lastly, number seven. The friends of Jesus have their prayers answered favorably.

Now, as a general statement, this really is true for the Christian. It's not that Christians can ask for anything from God.

You know, new house, new car. You know, removal from every affliction. World peace, you know, etc. And simply get it like a divine candy dispenser.

Ask and it pops out. But rather as those who follow his commands. Those who love him. Those who know his purposes. And desire the things that Jesus desires.

[ 31 : 42 ] Well, then they ask in accordance with what Jesus wants. And as a result, they get it. They think through what Jesus would want.

And they ask for that. They don't ask what they want to consume it on their own desires. But rather for what Jesus would want.

And as a result of asking for what Jesus wants, they get it. Do you believe that? Do you pray like that?

Like you believe that? Do you think through what Jesus would want to accomplish in your day? In your circumstances? And pray for that to take place? Lining up your desires with his desires? Do you pray expectantly as a result?

[ 32 : 46 ] Not demandingly. I know what you want, so I'll pray for that. And you know, you better produce. No. But pray expectantly. Understanding this promise that those requests that line up with his desires are going to get granted.

So as the end of Jesus' life here on earth, you know, in our text here, draws to a close. He's in his final moments. Certainly the final moments with his disciples.

He's got a few more moments. Where his glory will shine, but they won't be with his disciples. So at this time, he reminds his disciples of these things to prepare them for carrying out his ministry.

And it's very important to note this. While each of these things belongs to all the friends of Jesus by general pattern, as a result of your position in Christ, that is, you being a branch connected to the vine, and the continual effective working of the gospel in you, we are also called to operate, to live out life based on these things, based on these truths.

So while the true friends of Jesus love each other, the Bible encourages us to love fervently, pushing us to the max of what that love looks like.

[ 34 : 27 ] So while the true friends of Jesus know divine truth, and yet the Bible says to study the word of God, to show yourself approved, and to teach and apply it rightly, the true friend of Jesus has been called, chosen, called out of the world.

And yet the word of God says to walk in a manner that is worthy of that calling. A true friend of Jesus bears eternal fruit, and yet the Bible says to seek to bear more fruit in response to the work of God in our life.

The friend of Jesus prays and God answers, and yet the Bible says pray fervently, pray effectually, like with effect, and pray without ceasing.

So in this way, these are both precious promises, truths of who we are as believers. And they're also direct commands for us, for our life as believers.

And if these things were important for Jesus to prepare his disciples for his departure, and for them to continue this ministry of his on earth, then it certainly must be important for us as a church to understand.

[ 35 : 58 ] In fact, I think it's critical, if we want to be effective friends of Jesus, ministering in his name, ministry effectively and rightly, carrying out his ministry in our families, amongst each other, in the church, and out to our community, these have to be critical.

Jesus took the last moments of his time together with his disciples to remind them of these things.

So I know the growth group questions provided to you in your swordsmanship last week, they were really directed at kind of preaching through the entire text.

So if you're a growth group leader here, you need some questions to follow in order to guide discussion, I'll be happy to provide those, but I'm sure you can handle that. But here's what I want

you, in your growth group tonight or during the week, here's what I want you to contemplate from this text.

I want you to first rejoice together in these great promises of our position in Jesus. It is a marvel. It is a blessing. Beyond, you know, even our imagination. I want you to give God glory for his effective working through the gospel in you for those areas in which these things are evidenced in you.

[ 37 : 40 ] That's evidence of God's working. That's evidence of God's glory. And we should rejoice in those. We should acknowledge God in those things. So both in your individual lives and each other, where you see it in each other, and in the life of our church.

But I also want you to reflect on those areas where we fall short, where you fall short. And repent before God for those things.

And this is where growth groups are so important to our life as a body together.

Because we get to do these things together. And we get to grow in these ways together. So I'd encourage you, if you aren't part of one, that you would join one.

Come see me. I'll get you connected with one. So that you can grow with other believers in these things. In these one another's.

[ 38 : 50 ] Let's pray.ética p.