

FOR GOD'S SAKE GROW UP

CONNECT BREAK THE ICE AND GET PEOPLE TALKING

- What is most important to you in a friend?
- In what phases of life have you had the easiest or hardest time making friends? Why?
- Have you ever felt particularly let down by a friend?

TRUTH UNDERSTAND AND DISCUSS THE SCRIPTURE'S MEANING

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay 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. (John 15:13-15)

The Scriptures have much to say on the topic of our relationships—to Christ, to the church, to each other, and to the world around us. Especially important in this regard is the idea of *friendship*. In the book of Isaiah, God plainly calls Israel his chosen and his friend (Isaiah 41:8). Jesus is called a friend of sinners like you and me in Matthew 11:19. The Epistle of James commends us that, "...friendship with the world is enmity with God" (James 4:4). Yet still, so many misconceptions and confusions exist around the concept of how to experience lasting, satisfying, and—most of all—worshipful friendships.

FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR MAKING GREAT FRIENDS AND BEING ONE

Quality friendships can be difficult to foster in our day to day lives for so many reasons. Here are five brief principles that can inform our biblical understanding of friendship.

I. Principle 1: Be a Friend Intentionally

READ: Proverbs 18:24

DISCUSS: In some ways, it seems we all tend toward relationships of convenience (common spaces, goals, experiences, etc.). How does this proverb inform our understanding of what it means to be intentional about friendships?

II. Principle 2: Choose Your Friends Intentionally

READ: Proverbs 13:20, Proverbs 22:24-25

DISCUSS: What do these proverbs say about the friends one keeps in life? What might this mean for how the Church is called to befriend the world around us?

III. Principle 3: Be a Friend Full of Truth and Grace

READ: Proverbs 17:17, Proverbs 27:6, Proverbs 27:17

DISCUSS: How does the gospel of Christ inform our commitment to truth and grace in our friendships? How do you see this expressed through these proverbs?

IV. Principle 4: Be in Multiple Circles of Friends

READ: Luke 6:12-16, Luke 10:1, Matthew 17:1-2

DISCUSS: What can we learn from the circles of friends we see surrounding Jesus? How can we translate this into our lives at school, work, church, or in our families?

V. Principle 5: Make Friends on Mission

READ: Matthew 4:19, Matthew 28:18-20

DISCUSS: Common goals can be instrumental in forming quality relationships, but these can easily become based solely on the convenience of the task at hand. How does understanding the Kingdom of Heaven push us past just forming friendships, but keeping them?

GRACE

SEE HOW THE PASSAGE CONNECTS TO JESUS

Reread John 15:13-15. Jesus offers to each and every one of us the opportunity to call him King, Brother, Lord, and Savior—but also *Friend*. He lays down his life as our sins, so we take confidence in the promise that he has saved us from our social failings and shortcomings. He gives us commands of love and grace in order to be a better, more compassionate friend. And, he makes the Father known to us in his truth and grace. Jesus then stands as our greatest example who a friend is, and what a friend does. Because of this, his grace and love can cover all of our hurt from failed or failing friendships, and show us all the way to pursue God through our love of others.

CHANGE

APPLY THE PASSAGE TO OUR THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND ACTIONS

- What do you feel God is calling you to change about your ideas or your practice of friendship?
- How does the gospel inform who we are as friends to each other and the community around us?
- Can you think of a friendship that needs attention right now? How will you pursue gospel change there?

PRAYER

RESPOND TO THE PASSAGE IN PRAYER

- Pray that God would impress upon us our great need for close friendship with Christ to lead us.
- Pray for humility, that we may know how to address hard situations in our friendships to make them better.