Friendship With God - Session 2

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[0:00] We're continuing on this journey that began all the way back in the first century. They've called this topic, if you go back and read the Amesitia Dei, which is just the Latin! for the friendship of God. And there's truths in Scripture that as we read, you've come across them yourself that are difficult to understand. Guys write for spending lifetimes trying to understand certain doctrines. There's some that are often, it seems, intentionally left vague or unclear. And this is not one of those topics. You think to, some topics are so clear a child can understand. We'll go to John 3, 16, the fundamentals of our faith, that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. It's simple. A child can understand it. Or John 6 of, you know, that the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is in Christ Jesus our Lord and we can understand these things. The friendship of God is written so clearly, so plainly that anyone can understand it. A child cannot misunderstand it and yet they're misunderstood.

And so you come to the world and it's not enough that they misunderstand or they misrepresent these doctrines. They redefine what the friendship of God is. Think according to the doctrines that we've already looked at. Our first truth that we looked at last night was that friendship with God is exclusive in the world and the culture and cultural Christianity. He says, no, God's love and God's friendship is inclusive. Really, God doesn't have very many enemies except for maybe Hitler or Stalin or anybody on your social media that doesn't agree with you politically.
Those are the only people that are God's enemies. They say, God doesn't choose His friends. We choose whether or not we want God to be our friend. Do you know people who say things like this? And they flatten God's friendship to things like, Jesus is my homeboy. Where we say, they flatten friendship to say, my friendship with God is exactly the same as my friendship with my hunting buddies or my video game buddies. What they do is they take God's friendship without His authority. Our second truth, friendship involves revelation. God reveals His will and His commands and His demands and He reveals Himself to us so that we may know Him even as He knows us fully. And the world says, don't convict us.
We don't want God's revelation. We don't want His pure revelation. We want our ears tickled. And if you don't believe me, go into Mardel and look at the books that you see on the shelves and what they reveal about God. They say, tickle our ears. Don't convict us, but comfort us. Reassure us. Tell us about the benefits that we'll have and the prosperity that we'll have if we would just make Jesus our friend. And so God speaks pleasant truths to us. We love that. We've been adopted the warmth of that metaphor. We've been given gifts. We've been given friendship. But He also speaks very unpleasant truths and truths that are hard to hear. He tells you about your sin and its consequences.
And He tells you that, yes, He's loving, but He's also just. And He tells you about the consequences of your sin if you do not have faith in Jesus Christ. And He speaks frankly and openly about what that really means. And He gives you much hard work to accomplish in this life. And He sees as one instance the corruption and the exploitation and the oppression of the religious system in His day, and He takes a whip. There's not a theology of the world where they don't have a place to categorize this, of Jesus getting out a whip and turning over the tables of money changers. Or as He says to the disciples, not one stone of this temple is going to be left on the other. And so the culture says, no, God is love. But not as He defines it, as we define it, as we want to define it. And so we're supposed to love our neighbor. And again, ignoring the Jesus who is just. And we're going to soon see, stealing time from our next session, we're going to see that friendship with God involves loyalty. And the world says, no, we want the benefits of a relationship with God without the cost that comes with a true relationship with God. God says, take up your cross every day and

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follow me.
[4:36] And that's what you're doing when you call Jesus Lord. You're setting your alarm for school every morning or every night so that when you wake up in the morning, you pray and you say, what is it that you want me to do today, Lord? Right? Not my will, but your will. He says, take up my cross, take up your cross and follow me. And He says, if you're not willing to lose your life, you'll never find it.

There's no cost to cultural Christianity. In the religions of this world, there's a laying down your life, there's a taking pains that you have to have of making sure that every single word of the Bible you're submitting to. And there's not one. That's what we do when we open God's Word. We say, is there any word, not even one singular word here, Lord, that I'm not in obedience to? That's why we call Him Lord. And the world says, as long as Christianity doesn't interfere with my lifestyle, as long as friendship with God doesn't interfere with my plans, my desires, my will, my lifestyle, as long as it's convenient, as long as it doesn't cost me anything, then I'll be God's friend.
And you see, no, friendship with God involves its exclusive, it's His revelation, its loyalty. And so if you believe the things that these cultural Christians believe, you are not God's friend, as He defines it in His Word. And the reality is that God rules and reigns in this world through an open Bible. And it's for that reason, in submission to our Lord and in submission to His Word, I invite you to open your copy of God's Word to John 12. We're going to sprint through the context of the upper room, if you could keep up with me. And we're going to end in this upper room discourse discourse in the greatest illustration of friendship with God that's found anywhere in the Bible.
But I want you to see the context that it comes in. In John 12, just as a summary of this chapter, Jesus says, He came to seek and to save that which is lost. And He says, whoever rejects me, this is so important, whoever rejects me and does not keep my words, he has a judge. And He's getting ready to introduce this character Judas and the work that He's going to do. Even skip down to John 13.
This is where Jesus washes the disciples' feet, and He prefaces it in verse 2. Look at verse 2. During supper, when the devil had already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him, skipping it, says, Jesus rose from supper. He laid aside His outer garments, and taking a towel, He tied it around His waist. And He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around Him. You're going to see all these threads come together, but I can't hear this without hearing H.B. Charles. He preaches what he calls two-basin theology, where he says you either get out your basin with your towel, and you wash the feet of the disciples, or you get out the basin of Pontius Pilate, and you wash your hands of Jesus Christ. But you've got to do one or the other. And he also says here that He takes this towel, and He takes this basin, and He does the work of a slave. And then He says to His friends, the servant is not greater than his master. Meaning, if I do this for you, you too go and do this for others. In verse 21, He says Jesus was troubled in His spirit. Here comes this theme again. [7:58] And He says, truly, truly, I say to you, one of you is going to betray Me. Verse 27, Jesus sends Judas Iscariot away, and He says, what you do, do quickly. And then He looks to Peter in verse 38, and He says, are you going to lay down your life for Me? Are you going to be loyal to Me? He says, no, I say to you, the rooster will not crow until you have denied Me three times. Famously in John 14, as you skip to that chapter, Jesus says, I go to prepare a place for you. You know this. This is what we preach at funerals. It's a wonderful truth that clicked for me, what He's actually saying. It wasn't until after I had adopted five children. When He says, I go to prepare a place for you, He's going into heaven, and He immediately says after that, I will not leave you as orphans, but I will come to you. And so for every kid that we've adopted, we've got the joy and the privilege of getting to go into their room and prepare by dressers and by beds and zombie posters and Nerf darts and Legos, and we get the place ready for them because we love them. And He actually doesn't use friendship in John 14. He introduces that in John 15. He uses the warmer metaphor of adoption, where He says, I'm going to come back, and emphasizing the warmth of the relationship that we have with God, He says, I'm going to adopt you.

I'm preparing the place for you now, and you're going to be with me where I am. That's John 14. I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you because I love you. And now John 15 is where we land. We come to one of the most famous passages of Scripture. It's the metaphor of abiding. It's a joke among youth pastors that this is where people go for denounce, and we try to avoid it. And for some reason, we always end up here. I don't know why. It's a very beautiful passage of Scripture. I

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asked my friend, I said, what's on your heart? I want you to come do a D now at this church. He said, we got to do John 15 and abide. And I was like, all right. So I've tried to avoid it, and yet here we are, John 15 together, because we can't help it. This is the greatest metaphor in the Bible, analogy, the greatest passage that talks about friendship with God. It's the premier place.
And John 15, famously and insightfully, verse 13 says, greater love has no one than this, than someone lay down his life for his friends.
You are my friends if you do what I command you. I have called you friends for all that I've heard from the Father I have made known to you. We saw with Abraham last night that the old covenant was a covenant of friendship. It was the covenant that was the basis of Abraham and Moses' friendship with God. And now you come to the New Testament, and this passage right here shows you the new covenant is a covenant of friendship. And more than that, it's a wonderful illustration. More than just teaching you, it illustrates for you what friendship with God is like more than any other passage in the Bible.
And let's read it all in its glory, John 15, 1 to 17. Are you ready? Jesus says, I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, He takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit, He prunes that it may bear more fruit.
[11:12] Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do what? If anyone does not abide in me, he's thrown away like a branch and withers, and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my word abides in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you, abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 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've 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. And I want to go back and review. We said all the five truths that this metaphor of friendship is communicating. I want to go back and rehearse those with you, and I want you to see every one of those truths is here. This is a metaphor, an analogy about friendship. And first we said friendship is exclusive. We were elected, we were chosen by God the Father for friendship. Look at John 15, 16. He says in the middle of this text, you did not choose me, but I chose you. We're going to stop for a minute, because we're going to come back, and you're going to see just how exclusive this relationship really is. But the second aspect that we defined was friendship as revelation.
And it comes in the two immediately previous verses. This is revelation as in shared knowledge. John 15, 14 to 15, you are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, because the servant doesn't understand or doesn't know what the master is doing. But I've called you friends, because everything that I've heard from my Father, let me say it this way, everything that I've heard from my Father, I have made known to you. So Jesus reveals the Father's heart. You go all the way to the early church, Ambrose spoke about friendship as revelation from John 15. And this is what he says about our text. He says, quote, he gave a model of friendship for us to follow so that we might do the will of a friend. Open whatever secrets we have in our hearts to our friend and not be ignorant of his mysteries. Let us show our hearts to him and let him open his heart to us. Indeed, a friend hides nothing if he is genuine. He pours out his spirit just as the Lord Jesus pours out the mysteries of the Father. And part of what Jesus is doing with this text is we've looked at the context. We saw John 12 to John 15, and he wants to correct a potential misunderstanding that could come out of this context. He says, all that I've heard from the Father I've made known to you. And then he says, no longer do I call you servants, but I have called you friends. I'm going to stop and say for a minute, I've always thought that the coolest tattoo that you could ever get, especially as a man, is just to get doulos or the word for slave tattooed on your

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thigh. I won't leave it there.
I'll go on to say, because in Revelation, Jesus says when he comes back in glory riding on the white horse, he's going to have the name Lord tattooed on his thigh. And I was like, how cool would it be to have a matching tattoo with Jesus Christ? Wouldn't that be cool? So actually, you got to be careful who you say this to, because a guy in our church went and did that. He's got doulos written on his thigh, but it's really interesting here that the premier illustration that Jesus wants for you to carry is actually not the illustration of slave. He doesn't want you primarily to think of yourself as slave, and I'm reconciling something in my own mind that you can ask in your small groups.
If Jesus is saying the premier metaphor that defines our relationship with him is friendship, then why does Paul always refer to himself as a slave or a bondservant of God? And you can come and teach me that. And so maybe this guy in my church, you may have to rethink this. Maybe instead of doulos, we should tattoo philos, meaning friend of God, because God has revealed by his spirit his plans. And so the potential misunderstanding from this context is what we've already seen, it kind of looks like we're just slaves. And look at what Jesus has done. He just gave him the model of foot washing, which is literally the work of a servant. It's literally the work of a slave.
[16:28] And then he says, slaves, he says, you are my friends if you do what I command. And that's what servants do is they don't accomplish their own will. They live to do the will of the person that they're serving. And so it kind of feels like we're just servants. And he goes on and he says that it's his will to send us out to accomplish his will, much like a master would send out his slave to accomplish his will on the earth. And then there's this concept of the vine and the branches, which if you understand the ancient world in its context, a slave was seen as an extension of the master. They would actually call them tools. Let me see a hand up. Has anybody read Wingfeather?

Any Wingfeather fans in the room? We love it. When they go work in the fork factory, we obviously have read it. When the children are enslaved and they have to work in the fork factory, they call them tools because they're seen as extensions of their masters. And it seems like with this metaphor of a vine and its branches, well, the branches are just an extension of the vine. It feels like it's just servitude. And so Jesus then provides in that context this clarification in his farewell discourse.
He says, the mark of our relationship is not forced servitude, but it's friendship. Hear this again. He says, no longer do I call you servants, for the servant doesn't know what his master is doing. I have called you friends for the reason. All that I've heard from my father, I have made known to you. And so he says, he actually hinges it all. He says, if you want to know why you're my friend and not my servant, even though I do ask you to go and do my will on the earth, he says, it's because of revelation. It's because friendship involves revelation. I have made known to you my heart. What master has his servant come and sit down? And he says, let me share with you my plans. Let me share with you what I'm going to do and the purpose behind it. No, that's what you do with a friend. Slaves are told what to do. Friends are told what is happening. Masters don't write letters and books. They don't give a Bible, right? They don't write books and give it to their servants. That's what friends do. And also under this idea of revelation comes this idea, ancient idea of frankness over flattery. True friends tell each other the truth. So if you've got a guy and he goes to his friend, he says, bro, am I ugly? A true friend's going to say, you know what? Yeah, bro. Yeah. And a matter of fact, you probably need to go to the gym as well, right? We tell each other the truth. We reveal hard truths. We don't flatter. If somebody flatters you, they are not your friend. And so Jesus shares himself and he uses a word that's very important in the ancient world, very important in the Bible. It says he speaks openly to you. The God of glory speaks openly to you. He tells you the truth. And this is why he says flatterers are false friends, but nine times in the book of John, the word openly or frankly is used. He opens up with personal revelation, secrets. Paul says he reveals to us the mysteries of God. It's not only about intimacy, but remember Aristotle's perfect friendship. It's a friendship of virtue. God wants the best out of you, even as you want the best out of your true friends. And so Jesus is promising that friendship with him is going to end up in being a virtuous life, being conformed into the image of his son.
That's what revelation does. And stealing time from our next session, it was exclusive, it was revelation, but it's also loyalty. And I want you to see it in this passage. I want you to see all of this in this passage. He says, you are my friends if you do what I command you.
And we want to say all of these are also shared. It's shared fellowship, shared communion, but it's also shared loyalty. Not only does Jesus say to you, you must do what I command you, but you also

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see his loyalty to you when he says greater love has no man than this, verse 13, that he lay down his life for his friends. So he's not asking you to do anything that he has not already done for you. [20:30] And then on top of that, we have two new truths that the metaphor of friendship teaches us. We see them right here in this passage. This would be number three for our total session. Number four in this lesson, friendship is communion. Friendship is communion or fellowship with God. We have friendship with God because we have been made his friends in Christ. Think back to Moses. Moses in Exodus 33 11 spoke to God face to face as a man speaks with his friend. Abraham spoke with God as a man speaks to his friends. And we use this word communion. Is that what you call it at Mustang? Do you guys take communion on? How often do you do it? Do you do it once a month on first Sundays or something like that?

But communion is so much broader than just the communion that we take. That's part of it. But what does that word communion mean? What does it mean to commune? John Owen, writing on friendship, describes it. He says it's a kind of back and forth relationship with God, even as you have a back and forth relationships with your friends. And he uses the word communion almost equivalent to how you would use the word friendship. So it's this friendship with God. He says our communion then with God consists in his communication of himself to us with our return unto him of that which he requires and accepts flowing from that union which is in Jesus Christ that we have in him. So he says we have been united with Christ. We have fellowship with him.

He communicates his love and his truth and his spirit and his purposes and his word. And in a word, we could say God communicates himself to us in Jesus. And so then what do we do? Well, we return to him and we participate to him the things that he loves. And so all of a sudden, we're loving our neighbor as ourself and we're serving our friends and we're taking up our basin and we're washing the feet of the disciples and we are trusting him and we're worshiping him and we're grateful for him and we're obedient to his word as he rules and reigns in our hearts through the Bible. Does that make sense?

He pours himself out to us. We pour ourselves back out to him. He gave himself to us. He gives himself to us. So we gave ourselves to him and we give ourselves to him continually. Communion is fellowship.

John Piper says it this way, communion refers to God's communication and presentation of himself to us together with our proper response to him in joy. Communion assumes that God comes to us in love and that we respond joyfully to the beauty and perfections and offer of his fellowship. Communion is the end for which you were created, end quote. You were made for communion. You were made for friendship. That's why you were elected. That's what you were created for. And if the Bible says something once and God commands something of you, you better listen. But what if God says something to you 26 times? You better listen.

[23:29] This is what he says 26 times in Scripture. I will be their God and they will be my people. Do you remember that? Refrain over and over and over. That's the purpose. Some people trace themes all the way through the Bible. Some say that the main theme of the Bible is the kingship of Jesus Christ where you see him creating us. He is the author and he has the authority.

And I think you could look here and make a case that friendship and fellowship is a theme. You can trace all the way through the Scripture. Perhaps it's the theme. God says, I will be their God and they will be my people. We're meant to walk in the cool of the day with God like it was in the garden. And that's what Jesus accomplished at the cross. He took sin and guilt and shame out of the way so we could have a relationship with him. Nothing hindering that relationship. And communion is what is being illustrated in John 15, 4 to 5. There's this word, minnow, abide. Look at verses 4 and 5.

He says, abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me, you can do nothing. And again, part of why we surveyed John 12 to 15 is so that one, you could see that we're friends and not servants. But another is because he's working out this theme that there are true disciples and then there are Judas disciples. Judas called himself a friend of God and the disciples called themselves a friend of God. And so you come here, you see there's 11 true disciples and there's one Judas. There's 11 true vines and then there's one false vines. There's 11 vines or 11 people that are abiding in Christ and there's one who's just sucking resources from him. And so in this world, there's true vines and there's Judas vines and the illustration is here is some are friends of Jesus.

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They've attached themselves to him and they have communion with him and they're going to bear fruit. And Jesus says in this passage that he's going to prune you. This is one of those hard truths that he tells you. He's going to bring suffering and he's going to bring trials. He's going to bring a lot of joy and happiness as well, but there's going to be periods of prolonged suffering. He promises that.

[25:49] And he says when he does that, you're going to bear fruit. More than that, you're going to bear more fruit. More than that, you're going to bear much fruit. And then you're going to know because of that that you are truly his disciple and you are truly his friend. And then there are others who are false branches and they are cut off and they're burned. He's talking about Judas. Where did Judas go? He separates him from the group such that he doesn't even get to hear these words in this message. He's going to betray Jesus and in his guilt, he's going to hang himself and then fall headlong in his temporal judgment. And then he will be consigned to an eternity in hell where he will be cast into the fire and burned. And he was and he remains until this day. There was no communion with Christ. There was no participation in Christ. Jesus was the true vine. Salvation and friendship, the point of this message is it is through Jesus. Friendship is through Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And he called him friend. Judas called him friend when he was not abiding in him. And so the message for you is clear.

You have to abide in Jesus Christ. There's salvation in no one else. There's friendship through no other means than through Jesus Christ. And we come to our final point that we're going to see in here, this fifth truth. Friendship is participation, shared purpose. You complete the works of Jesus Christ.

You complete his sufferings. He's handed the baton to you and you go on and you take the torch farther. As a matter of fact, he's going to say greater works will you do than I did in this world. Friendship as shared purpose is something that C.S. Lewis talks about in his book, Four Loves. And he's talking about friendship and why it's not used. You know, we read there's only seven or eight times that friendship is exclusively used. He says why. He says, I think the Bible doesn't talk about much about friendship because it's already so spiritual. We already understand it. And so the metaphor kind of loses its power. We say the whole point of an analogy is it takes you from what's known to what is unknown.

He says, well, with friendship, you already know. It's so obviously spiritual. And he goes on to say, lovers are normally face-to-face and they're absorbed in each other. Friends stand side-by-side absorbed in a common interest. There's another author said that lovers tend to be exclusive.

[28:24] They want to retreat and spend time with one another. But friends and perfect friends, they want to stand side-by-side and accomplish work together. They want to do things. It's about emotional intimacy. We're intimate with our friends. There's fellowship with our friends.

But we also do things together. We expand the kingdom of God together. It's what good friends do is shared participation. And this participation is embodied in the words of Jesus Christ and this commissioning of verse 16, as the Father has sent me, so I am sending you. That's what he says actually in John 17. Here he says, you will go and bear much fruit. You've got to go and work. We have a shared purpose. There's stuff we got to do. And so the telos or the goal of friendship is to accomplish God's will on the earth. It's our shared purpose. It's producing fruit. We share a mission with the Lord of glory. It's not all about the relationship, but it is in part about that. But it's a goal that points outside of that friendship. Edward Klink says, the branches can only produce by participation in the vine. And the vine produces through the branches. So here you get to see a wonderful truth about Jesus

Christ. He says that friendship is the end, right? Or he says, yeah, friendship is the end. It's relationship, but it's also the means. So the end of this is that we actually get to participate and have access to God, but then it's also a means. It makes us able to bear fruit and to do good works in the world through our Lord and Savior. And so Jesus, he's kind of temporarily paused this agricultural metaphor, and then he brings it back with full force. He says he chose his friends that they might go and bear fruit. He's going to use other images, and this is where we get to cooperate with Heritage Church and Mustang. He says, we're expanding the kingdom of God like leaven, a little bit of leaven that's put in bread, and it leavens the whole lump, where there's a responsibility to proclaim the kingdom of God. We've been given the ministry of reconciliation where we get to go make peace between God and men all through the earth to every tribe, tongue, and nation, and it's a powerful mission. And he says, we're bringing the kingdom of God like a mustard seed, where it starts small

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and it's slowly filling the earth and becoming a great and mighty tree. We are participating in that. What Jesus began in all of his work was concentrated in a little tiny piece of land on the eastern Mediterranean, and he never made it outside of that. And at the end of Jesus's life, he had 120 disciples in an upper room, and have we seen the kingdom expand? Do you know people that have gone to the far corners of the earth? Have you shared the gospel with your friends and participated in this ministry of reconciliation? Scholars look to verse 16, and they say, this is the commissioning of the disciples to continue in the work of Christ. They say, the friends of God are commissioned. Abraham was commissioned, and he went and did the work of God. Moses was commissioned, and he was called, and he was chosen, and now Jesus has chosen friends in the New Testament. And going back to our first point one more time, the exclusive nature of friendship, I want you to see God elects his friends. He says, you did not choose me, but I chose you. And then Jesus also redefines that friendship by the cross, saying, greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

And I want you to see here just how exclusive this friendship is. He chooses his friends, and then he dies for his friends. You go back to the ancient philosophers. We've already said this. It was part of the good life. You go to Aristotle. You go to Cicero. They've got these categories of friendship, these philosophical discussions. They define friendship at the most basic level as friendships of utility. You remember what a friendship of utility was? These are your connecting points. Oh, you know this electrician. You know this guy. You've got to meet my hunting buddy. You've got way. You're connecting people. What you love is usefulness. When you're seeing what is useful in another person, it's not that you don't like that person. You're loving the usefulness that comes from it. Working your way up more intimately, Aristotle says, then there's friendships of enjoyment. [32:44] All right, you're gaming buddies. You're cheerleading friends. Whatever it is, it's enjoyment and pleasure. And they organize around a shared hobby. They don't care so much about virtue and character.

And so it's easy for us to find kind of a sense of belonging outside of the church. We can go to OniCons and Comic Cons, and we can go to, you know, furry conventions. People find their fellowship all over the place because there's not virtue formation, and there's not accountability, moral accountability in those places, are there? It's not that you don't care about these people. What you love is enjoyment. And then remember that the ancients talked about perfect friendships. And these are enduring, and these are rare. These require time. They require trust. This is what we get out of the local church. It's virtue formation. We want the best out of people. We want them conformed as Christians into the character of Christ. And these guys wrote that the greatest display of friendship is a laying down of their life for their friends. That was the highest conception that these ancient philosophers could come up with. The greatest display of friendship would be you laying down your life for somebody else. And this is what God loved when He did this. He says, He loved you. He loved you for you. He wanted the best in you. He wanted your character. And what Aristotle and Cicero could only imagine as the highest form of friendship, Jesus Christ actually accomplished. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. Jesus died for his church.

And so right after this meal, you can read and continue in John. Jesus prays. They sing a hymn, and they pray. Jesus crosses the Kidron Valley there as He's going up to the Mount of Olives. He goes to the very place and to rendezvous with this guy that's going to betray Him, like a person that called Him friend. And I hope you don't know, but you will experience that the greatest wounds that you will ever experience in this life come from those who are supposed to be your friend. And Jesus understands what that means and what that feels like. Matthew 26 records the exact words that Jesus exchanges with Judas as He comes with an army. It's the brightest night of the year. He's half a mile from Jerusalem, and there's this army of men with hammers and clubs, and they march to Jesus to arrest Him. And here comes Judas, and He walks up to Him, and it said that He had given Him a sign saying, the one I kiss is the man, seize Him. And He came up to Jesus at once and said, greetings, Rabbi, and kissed Him. And the very first word that Jesus says in reply, do you know what it is?

[35:30] He says, friend, do what you came to do. And they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized Him. And so Jesus uses this metaphor in John 15 of the vine and the branches to communicate the highest and most glorious gospel truth. I mean, He uses this metaphor to illustrate the gospel itself. John 15 is teaching the reversal of Genesis 3, where we were created as friends

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with God, and we communed with God, and Adam and Eve walked with God in the cool of the garden, and they spoke to Him face to face as people speak with friends, and they were called friends of God. And then sin came in the serpent, who came and deceived them, and they're cast out of the garden. And so sin separated Adam and Eve from God, and they're naked, and they hid themselves, and they retreated, and they hid from God.

And so to understand this gospel, you have to understand that what happened in that moment was that we became enemies of God. He's no longer our friend. We're separated. We're enemies. And He says to those who are unrighteous that God is, that He hates the wicked, and He's angry with them every day.
And we know that we're sinful even to our core. It's original sin. Isaiah 59 2, your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that you do not hear. And God promises to the serpent in Genesis 3, there's going to be, God promises to all of them, there's going to be a separation between you and creation, and a separation between you and God, and between you and yourself, and you and one another. And He speaks to the serpent, and He makes this promise to him. He says, I'm going to put enmity between you and the woman, and between His offspring and your offspring. And in that moment, 6,500 years ago, He makes another promise to that serpent. And He says, He's going to bruise your head, and you're going to bruise His heel. And if you're not looking carefully, you might miss that this is a promise, a proto-good news, proto-euangelion, that there is one who's coming who's going to crush the serpent's head, and He's going to reunite this fellowship between God and men. And what John is saying in John 15 is, that was Jesus
Christ. He came to reverse the curse. Romans 5, 10, if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, how much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life?
Or chapter 5, verse 1 of Romans, since we've been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Colossians 1, 21, and you who were once alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death. Peter talks about it as well, it's everywhere. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God. So friendship is from God the Father. And now you see so clearly that friendship is through Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 5, 18, all this is from God, who through Jesus Christ has reconciled us to Himself. And He gave us the ministry of reconciliation. And therefore, we are ambassadors for Jesus Christ making His appeal through us. What that verse is saying is, you are now friends with God.
[38:55] More than that, you have a shared purpose. That's what we're talking about, where you get to go and make friends between God and men. And if you think about this in Scripture, God loves to go back and talk about your shared experience and your past memories. He says 64 times in the book of Deuteronomy, He says, remember Egypt. Remember that you were sojourners. Remember that you had no place to belong. And now, being where you are now, in the middle of the promised land, in a land flowing with milk and honey, love the sojourner therefore. And He comes to you in the New Testament, He says, remember that you were enemies of God and you have been reconciled through the blood of Jesus Christ. And now He says, now beautifully, you have the ministry of reconciliation. You go make friends. You go teach people how they can be friends with God. You understand the privilege of the shared purpose that God has called you to. You've been given the ministry of reconciling enemies and making them friends. And you go back and you remember Abraham under the first covenant who was asleep as God moved through the pieces saying, may it so be to the one who breaks this covenant. And remember that Abraham, he knew he was a covenant breaker. He fulfilled the terms himself. And we've said this, that you are a covenant breaker. And every one of us is a covenant breaker by nature. I want you to see that after Jesus leaves this upper room, the gospel of John takes pains for you to understand that what Jesus does,

He does alone. He wants you to understand that everybody is going to leave Him and everybody is going to betray Him. You remember as He goes out to the Mount of Olives and all these men come, the disciples flee. And they all leave. And He told Peter, Peter's like, never will I leave you, Lord. I will go with you. And He says, you're going to deny me three times before the rooster crows.
And a slave girl puts enough pressure on Peter that he falls away. And even in the end of Mark, there's that little bit about there's like a guy, they take his towel and he runs away naked. And you're

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like, what is that about? My only answer is everybody that was there left. And that's what He's trying to get you to understand. The people on the periphery, His disciples, the work that Jesus did at the cross, He did alone. Because it doesn't want you to think, well, there was a couple guys that were just so holy and so pure, they weren't covenant breakers. No, it says this is the hour and the power of darkness. Jesus went and He accomplished this work by Himself. And in the same way as Abraham, who believed the promises of God and it was counted to Him as righteousness, so it's true for you as a covenant breaker. For the one Jesus Christ who suffered and died on the cross as a covenant breaker, living a perfect life, becoming a perfect, acceptable sacrifice, so you too, when you put your faith and trust in Him, will become a covenant fulfiller like He was. He will impute His righteousness to you.

He will impute your sin to Him. You will be called a friend of God. And if you've never done this, I invite you to abide in Jesus Christ. I invite you to put your faith in Him, to talk to a leader.

Don't leave the room. Don't leave your small group without talking to somebody about how you can have a relationship with Him. And I pray that you understand a little bit more deeply now what that relationship is and what it means. And we've learned in this session that friendship is communion. [42:20] And it just means we're friends. You get to participate with God. You have access to God. You abide in Him. You enjoy His fellowship. And we saw that friendship means shared purpose, meaning that we bear fruit to a hurting and a dying world. And we take on the ministry of reconciling God's enemies and making them His friends. We bear fruit and more fruit and much fruit through His power and in His name. But we can't forget that it's all made possible because of the loyalty of Jesus Christ to His friends. He laid down His life, as Jesus said in John 15, 13.

He did what ancient philosophers could only imagine. Greater love has no man than this, that someone lay down His life for His friends. Church, pray with me.

Lord, we don't know what to say except thank you. Part of what we return to you in this friendship and in this fellowship is our own gratitude and our own joy in the peace that you have made. And it's actually because of you and because of what you've done that we can come now with boldness to approach the eternal throne of God and to ask great things and demand great things. And we get to speak to you and to pray continually as we would speak to one of our friends. And so, Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for the access that you've given us to the Father. Thank you for what it cost.

We recognize that how exclusive it is. And so, we're so thankful to see the privilege that we have of getting to call the Lord of glory, our friend. You've revealed to us your will and you've revealed to us how we can go and share purpose. You've given us communion with you. And for all these things, Lord, we express an eternal gratitude. Thank you, Lord. Be with us. Guide us as we accomplish your will on the earth until we are with you one day face to face again as it was in the beginning, Lord.

Be with us. We love you. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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