

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

JANUARY 28 - FEBRUARY 1, 2019

TOU

SERMON SERIES

A Study of Philippians

MONDAY

John 15:12-17; Philippians 2:19-30

“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13)

The Bible has a lot to say about friendship, more than you may have thought. The subject of friendship is woven throughout the whole storyline of Scripture. It reaches its climax at the cross of Jesus Christ, the friend of sinners. The Bible is also practical as it pictures many friendships, good and bad, and gives practical wisdom in how to cultivate it well.

“I’ve never heard anyone say they wish for fewer, less-meaningful relationships. Each one of us longs to be more connected, more deeply, with friends. And this is because God made us for true friendship.” —Drew Hunter

Believers agree that salvation is about the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. But it is also more than this. Jesus gives all who trust Him the privilege of being His friends. And what is eternal life after all? According to Jesus: *“Now this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent”* (John 17:3). Jesus rescued us to forge an intimate friendship with the triune God (John 14:20-23). In the New Creation, we will

enjoy this true friendship with all other believers. Our future world is of friendship.

What about in churches today? When this lonely world of broken relationships sees churches filled with friendships—imperfect friendships, to be sure, but relationships filled with true repentance and forgiveness—then they will know that something has come from God. They will see that our talk of Jesus as a friend of sinners is real.

Friendship does not come from us; it came from God. And He will give us everything we need—through His Word and His Holy Spirit—to cultivate it well for the Glory of God.

Paul cultivated rich friendships as evidenced in his words commending and affirming Timothy and Epaphroditus. These men served Jesus Christ, the Gospel, and the Church through their friendship. It is a longing of my heart to be a friend like these men who served and gave of themselves sacrificially. The power of serving comes in and through our relationships.

QUESTION

How would you describe your relationship with Jesus Christ?
What do you long for in your relationships with other believers?

PRAYER

Thank God for His eternal friendship through Jesus Christ! Ask God to cultivate in your life deep and rewarding friendships.

TUESDAY

Proverbs 17:17; Philippians 2:19-22

“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”
(Proverbs 17:17)

Janice has seen her happy, comfortable, and stable life crumble over the last few months. Health concerns had become a reality as she was aging. Demands of her aging mother, now living with her and her husband, created tension at home. She became aware of escalating tension and noticed a subtle change in her husband’s behavior. She was overwhelmed with busyness. The increasing strain spilled over into her work routine as she was preoccupied with problems at home. She felt the struggle to keep up appearances that all was well with her. Janice noticed that her circle of friends gradually diminished. It seemed that few wanted to hang around somebody who wasn’t much fun anymore.

Her world came crashing down when her husband admitted to having an affair and now sought to divorce her. “I’ve never felt so alone in my life,” she told me later. “I thought all my friends would leave me as well, but Alice stayed by my side. At my lowest, she didn’t walk away. You have no idea of how much that meant, and still means, to me.”

All significant relationships are tested by disputes and difficulties. It's easy to walk away when friends no longer give as much as they take, but a true friend moves toward someone who is hurting. He or she provides stability when life is out of control and a listening ear when no one else wants to understand. A true friend doesn't jump in to fix problems. He or she offers advice sparingly.

We all want friends like this. To have a friend who cares about us during difficult times, we need to be this kind of friend.

Paul describes Timothy as a man who cares deeply about Paul's cares and serves alongside him. He says, *"I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. ... But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father, he has served with me in the work of the gospel"* (vv. 20, 22).

"Be slow in choosing a friend ... even slower in leaving a friend."
—Ike Reighard

QUESTION

In your life, who has been a friend who loves at all times?
Who needs you to be this kind of friend today? What will you do to show support?

PRAYER

Thank God for friends who stick by you through disputes and difficulties. Ask God to help you be the friend who loves at all times.

WEDNESDAY

Proverbs 27:17; 1 Samuel 19:1-7

“As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.” (Proverbs 27:17)

Eugene Peterson described the Christian life as “a long obedience in the same direction.” This life-long journey begins and ends with an intimate relationship with Jesus. But the road can be difficult; the discipleship process is arduous, long and lonely. Sometimes we may become discouraged and consider abandoning the journey. It is at such times that God will place a friend alongside you and me. One of God’s most significant gifts to us is friends who encourage us and lovingly challenge us to “keep going.”

The Bible tells us that a friend is someone who challenges you to become all that God intends. Jonathan could have succeeded his father, Saul, to become the next king of Israel. But he loved his friend David and encouraged him to follow God’s will, even though it meant Jonathan would forfeit his own claim to the throne (1 Samuel 19:1-7).

The mark of biblical friends is that their friendship draws you closer to Christ. They “sharpen” you and motivate you to do what is right. True friends tell you the truth and even risk hurting your feelings because they love you and have your best interest at heart (Proverbs 27:6).

Are you careful who you choose as friends? Jesus chose His closest friends wisely. He did not look for perfect friends, but friends whose hearts were set to follow God. It is equally important to examine the kind of friend you are to others. As a friend, it is your privilege to put the needs of others first (Proverbs 17:17). I want to encourage you to look for godly friends who will challenge you to become the person God desires. Proverbs tells us that good friendship will change us, but we must be receptive to the way God uses them to help us become spiritually mature.

“There is nothing on this earth more to be prized than true friendship.” —Thomas Aquinas

QUESTION

How has a friend recently encouraged you in your walk with the Lord? How would you describe your best friend? What steps do you need to take to become an “iron sharpening iron” friend?

PRAYER

Thank our Heavenly Father for the friendships that He has brought into your life. Ask Him to help you to be wise in all your choices for friends.

THURSDAY

Proverbs 18:24; 22:24-25; 27:5-6; 27:9; 29:5

“A true friend [loves] freely, advises justly, assists readily, adventures boldly, takes all patiently, defends courageously, and continues [to be] a friend unchangeably.” —William Penn

Friendship is undeniably important for your mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. With a solid support network in place, you can meet just about any challenge life throws at you. Plus, you can enjoy everything so much more when you're surrounded by friends who appreciate and truly “get” you. True friendship begins when two people have an affinity for something, or have something in common, or share a common vision. From the book of Proverbs, once forged friendship is built on these essentials:

Constancy: This means you can't be a good friend without availability. Proverbs 17:17 says a friend loves at all times—good and bad times, ordinary or routine times. Proverbs 18:24 says a friend will not let you go to ruin. A companion will say, “Call me if you need anything.”

Carefulness: This means you are emotionally connected or empathetic with this friend. Proverbs 25:20 describes the person who is unkind and uncaring—not a friend. Proverbs 25:17 says that wise friends do not wear out their welcome. A true friend cannot be happy while you are heavy hearted. This is why you can't have too many best/

true friends because of the emotional vulnerability required. Loyalty, respectfulness, and trustworthiness are included. Proverbs 22:24-25 warns about a friend's hot temperament and anger because it is contagious.

Candor: This means you tell your friend the truth. Proverbs 27:6 says wounds from a friend, painful words, are spoken, not hidden. But always we speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Proverbs 29:5 says that flattery is not benign but can cause harm.

Counsel: This means we are to share from the heart, which includes confidences and secrets. Proverbs 27:9 says that sweetness in a friendship refreshes the soul.

I pray often for my grown sons' friendships. I pray that they will be a true friend not only with their wives but also with others. We are never too old or too young to make true friends. Cultivating deep and true friendships will bring lasting joy and blessing.

QUESTION

Describe the perfect friend. What character traits do you look for in a friend? What character traits do you want to develop in yourself to be a true friend?

PRAYER

Thank God for the friendships you have cultivated. Ask God for help to develop the character traits of a true friend. Pray that friendships developed bring lasting joy and blessing.

FRIDAY

Proverbs 17:17; Philippians 2:19-30

How many friends do you have? Two? Twenty? One hundred? How many of them are close friends whom you can trust with anything? How many of them consistently encourage you and build you up? How many of them challenge you to love deeply and unselfishly? While it is easy to gain a huge number of “friends” on social media (how many Facebook friends do you have?), we all need more than just a few passing acquaintances who fill our newsfeed with funny animal videos or pictures of sunsets. Here are a few good reasons why everyone needs godly friendships.

Godly friends encourage you. Proverbs 17:17 says a friend loves at all times. At your best times and worst times they will love you. Godly friends will encourage you with the truth of God’s Word that may be obscured in the haze of difficulties and emotional distress. Paul had Timothy and Epaphroditus as friends, as well as Silas, Mark and Luke. Paul’s letters are filled with real people who stood with him, served with him, and were present with him in prison.

Godly friends will offer you God’s perspective through Scripture and good counsel. Advice is easily available today from close family members and friends anonymous through the internet. However, a godly friend will not tell you what you want to hear but what you need to hear. Godly friends will ask you difficult questions to find out how you REALLY are, how they can help, and how they can pray for you.

Godly friends will keep you accountable! I am always grateful for my friends who see me though the messes I have made and help me to get going again and not give up. They do this because they truly care about me.

Godly friends will draw you into a closer relationship with Jesus Christ. There is real joy in sharing with a friend what God is doing in and through your life.

Godly friends will pray for you. Who is praying for you this week? Who are you praying for? No one has all the answers. Godly friends will help you in your journey of faith. Paul was an amazing man of God, and he often wrote how he needed godly friends to accomplish the hard work God had called him to do. To whom could you be a friend like Timothy or Epaphroditus this week?

I am not advising anyone to drop their non-Christian friends! But I encourage you to cultivate rich friendships with other believers.

QUESTION

What benefits have you found in having a Christian friend?
How would you describe your best friend?

PRAYER

Ask God to help you cultivate and enjoy godly friendships. Ask God to help you to reach out to the lonely and lost at our church.

Sources

- The quote by Drew Hunter is taken from *Made for Friendship*, published by Crossway, Wheaton, Illinois, 2018.
- The quote by Ike Reighard can be found at <https://factsandtrends.net/2014/03/26/four-types-of-friends-every-pastor-needs/>
- The quote by Thomas Aquinas can be found at https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/thomas_aquinas_163328
- The quote by William Penn can be found at https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/william_penn_399607

