



LIFE GROUP SERMON NOTES

“Friends: Friends With God”

Ps James Lowe – Feb. 2, 2014

WARM-UP (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. *No right or wrong answers.*

- Who was your best friend growing up? What was one reason why?
- Who is one of your closest friends now? What's one thing you like about them?
- How do you like to spend time with some of your closest friends?

WORD (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at bethelbrentwood.org/media.

Friendship with God is the greatest of all possible friendships. Yet friendship with God seems strange to many people, in part because God is invisible. Also, some people who claim God as their best friend don't evidence good, healthy, strong human friendships, which should be the fruit of friendship with God.

“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 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.” (John 15:12-17 ESV)

Jesus is our model, our exemplar of deep, loving friendship. He has loved us so greatly, that he willingly suffered on the cross for our sins. That sacrifice of love was the culmination of a life lived in continual love, kindness, and goodness toward his disciples, whom he regarded as his friends. He revealed his heart, thoughts, and purposes to them. He has secured eternal access to the Father for them. All that he did for them, he also has done for us. All that he does for us, he does so that we too might love one another as he has loved us.

Exodus 3:1-22. Moses is a helpful example of friendship with God. At forty years of age he was aware of his divine calling to deliver the Hebrews, but he lacked the necessary character to fulfill it, as evidenced by the murder he committed. Consequently, Moses fled from Egypt and God's people, and settled for forty years in Midian, a land beyond the wilderness. Then God personally spoke to him through the burning bush which wasn't consumed. God told Moses to take off his sandals because he was on holy ground. In essence, God called him to surrender his life to God. It was only when Moses surrendered to God that he entered into friendship with God. Before this time Moses had no evidence of a friendship with God, but after this moment Moses went on to become known as God's friend: "Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend" (Exodus 33:11 ESV).

As Jesus taught, it is only when we are willing to obey God that friendship with him can truly exist. Jesus said to his disciples, "You are my friends if you do what I command you." Repentance, or surrender to God's rightful, loving authority, is the beginning of friendship with God. What was true for Moses and for the disciples is also true for us.

In that same encounter God also called Moses afresh to fulfill the role of being a deliverer for the Hebrews. God declared Moses' identity to be something more than what he was doing at the time, which was shepherding. Furthermore, and most importantly, God revealed more about himself to Moses. God referred to himself as "I am that I am" and as "Yahweh," which is the name God used for himself when he revealed himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were Moses' ancestors. The name Yahweh is actually derived from the verb "I am." God was in essence saying that he is the eternal God who is always present for his people. Becoming God's friend meant that Moses learned more about both God and himself. The result was that he was then able to live out the life that God intended for him and so fulfill God's good purpose for him.

God also desires to be our true friend, who reveals himself to us and defines us, guides us, empowers us, and charges us to fulfill his good purpose for our lives. He alone can enable us to be the full and true version of ourselves that he created us to be. God will be all this and more to us as a friend, provided we are willing to do what he says. He is willing to receive us as his friends not on the basis of anything we have done or haven't done in the past, but on the sinless merits of Jesus Christ, who was crucified for our sins and rose again. Jesus alone is the basis of our righteousness. To receive his gift of righteousness and so begin a friendship with God, we must simply repent and believe God's testimony concerning his Son. To repent is to surrender to God. It means to be willing to follow and obey him, the very thing which God says he requires in order for us to be his friends.

PERSONAL APPLICATION (10-15 minutes)

Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related topic for discussion.

- How does God demonstrate and exemplify the qualities of genuine friendship toward us?
- Identify one quality you think is important to friendship, and apply it to friendship with God.
- Identify one thing that can hinder a good, growing friendship with God?

PRAYER (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.

- That God would help us grow in our friendship with God, and help us reflect on how we can be better friends with God.
- That God would show us if we need to address any ungodly issues in our lives that would hinder our friendship with him, and give us the courage to talk to someone about it.
- That God would help us spur one another on to love, good deeds, and growing friendships with him and one another.