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**River in the Hills Church**

*Jesus’ Invitation to Friendship*

**I. Developing Friendship with God:**

When talking about the subject of prayer I think that is foundational that we connect with the fact that the Lord desires friendship; He wants friends who long to spend time with Him. The Word is full of examples of those who walked this out in their day-to-day living for decades and He is inviting us into this same level of sweet communion and lasting friendship. It’s called having an actual prayer life.

1. Intimate Friendship is Available:

God doesn’t look at this subject of friendship the way that we might imagine, He doesn’t feel trapped or tethered to it, He’s after more than surface level contractual agreement, He wants intimate friendship with us. It is important for us to understand this.

*“Oh, for the days when I was in my prime, when God’s intimate friendship blessed my house (Jb. 29:4)”*

1. We Can Cultivate Friendship with God:

It is an amazing thing that God wants to be friends with us and walking that out is one of life’s greatest gifts. In my opinion understanding the concept of friendship with God is one of the most important realities to cultivating a prayer life. I would say this is second only to understanding His love, and really friendship is an outflow and building block upon that revelation. But this friendship is grown, for it to be mature it must be cultivated.

*“that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God (Co. 1:10)”*

1. God is Serious About Having Friends:

We have become perhaps too accustomed with John 3:16 to properly understand what is being communicated to us about what God thinks about people. He likes people; He really wants relationship with people and He has been fighting for relationship with us. He gave His Son so that we might be afforded this outrageous opportunity.

*“For God so loved the world* (liked people so much) *that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (Jn. 3:16).”*

1. This Revelation Changes the Conversation:

The foundational principle of friendship shifts our relationship with God and changes our conversation dramatically. With the revelation that we can be God’s friend prayer graduates from religious duty into a dialogue with a real person who can be known and who wants to talk to us and hear from us. We want to posture our hearts in a way that cultivates friendship and interactions with the God of friendship.

**II. Getting a Revelation of Friendship:**

So if having this revelation changes the conversation that we have with Jesus we want to make sure we get it. We want to understand the relationship we are in and the invitation to friendship that we’ve been given.

1. Try to See the Relationship the Way Jesus Does:

We want to get a vision for reaching for Jesus in intimate friendship all the days of our lives. He speaks about discipleship in terms of His disciples being friends to a groom who is joyfully awaiting His wedding day.

*“And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast (*[Mt 9:15](http://bible1.crosswalk.com/OnlineStudyBible/bible.cgi?word=mt+9:15&version=nkj&st=1&sd=1&new=1&showtools=1)).”

1. Look at the Example John Left Us:

John understood. The Bible records John as being the disciple that Jesus loved. This is remarkable for a number of reasons, one that this was allowed to be written about any person, but also that John said it about himself. He had a revelation about the affections of Jesus.

*“Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you (Jn. 21:20)?”*

1. We Need to Decide How We will Approach Him:

We can either love Him from a distance or we can enter into daily fellowship with God, walking through life with Him as a friend. Many have decided to receive Jesus as their savior but then they keep Him at a safe distance in their moment to moment living. For many He is good enough to taste of once or twice a week in a service but then the other 100 plus hours they are awake each week He is not on their mind. We must willfully decide to engage Him, to embrace Him as our forever companion, the friend that wants to draw near.

“One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, *but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother* (Pr. 18:24).”

1. God is Urging Us to Make a Life Long Investment:

Investing into our relationship with Christ is not just the good thing to pour ourselves into for a season, we want to make the life long commitment to love Jesus and to grow in this friendship all our days. We want to wage war against anything that undermines the immediate reality of Christ and we want to hold that resolve for the decades of our walk with Him.

“One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: *That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life*, To behold the beauty of the Lord And to meditate in His temple (Ps. 27:4).”

**III. Understanding the Relationship:**

In the discussion of how we are to develop an enjoyable and effective prayer life we need to take into consideration that no one will spend much time seeking God if we believe He is far off or unapproachable. The truth is that we were redeemed out of darkness for far more than just the washing of our sins; God wants us to enter into relationship with Him on so many levels. When we know who we are to God we relate to Him far better. We need a right view of God so that we interact with Him and respond to Him the way He desires.

1. Addressing Wrong Thinking:

Foundational to our life of prayer is cultivating a right view of God. Many have a wrong view of God that sees Him as an angry taskmaster forcing us to endure conversation with Him (prayer) in order to prove our devotion to Him. If however we begin to perceive God as our tender Father and if we see Jesus as our passionate Bridegroom King then we will be energized in our spirit to confidently seek Him with all our heart in the place of relationship.

*“we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love (1Jn. 4:16).”*

*“the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father (Ro. 8:15).”*

*“The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine (Jn. 3:29)”*

1. The Example We have in Christ:

Jesus came and set the example for us in incredible way; He showed us how to have a personal relationship with the living God, the scriptures say that He is in closest relationship with the Father.

*“grace and truth came through Jesus Christ…who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father* (and) *has made him known (Jn. 1:17-18).”*

1. He Opened the Way for Us:

Jesus made the Father known to us and in so doing has opened a new way for us to relate to God. We now have permission to interact with Him in the same kind of relationship that Jesus has with Him.

*“I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them (Jn. 17:26).”*

1. Our Deepest Privilege:

Friendship is one of the most beautiful parts of life. It is with our close friends that we share our life, our hopes, sorrows and joys. It is a shocking thought that we could have any relationship with God at all. Far more unbelievable that we could call Him friend and even more that we can have as close of a friendship with God as we choose to have based off of our decisions. Our deepest privilege is that He invites us into intimate friendship.

*“I no longer call you servants…Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you (Jn. 15:14-15).”*

1. Relationships Take Work:

Like any friendship, this relationship requires work; just as our earthly friendships suffer if we ignore them, so our relationship with God will only improve with effort. If we want to have a deeper connection with the Lord then we have to invest to make that happen. We have to seek Him, it’s takes searching, and pressing in, and it takes that intentional seeking again and again; but the reward is that we are promised that we will find Him when we do.

*“I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me (Pr. 8:17).”*

*“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart (Je. 29:13).”*

*“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you (Jm. 4:8 NKJV).”*

**IV. Talking to God as a Lifestyle:**

Communication is the building block of all of our relationships, the better the communication, the stronger the relationship. In our relationship with God communication boils down to us being intentional to talk to Him.

1. Let’s Open the Door to Greater Intimacy:

Confronted with the reality that God desires deep friendship with us we have an open door to seek greater intimacy with Him. That door is all about our choosing to increase the measure and depth of our communication with Jesus. Prayer is our onramp to encounter His love because when we reach to Him through prayer He reveals more of His love for us.

*“Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me (Is. 66:20)!”*

1. Let’s be His Friends Daily:

He is looking for those who will walk with Him through joys and difficulties of life. He describes this relationship again and again in the context of us partnering with Him through prayer. We have an active role to play in order to deepen our participation with Him and our experience of Him. This message is intended to provoke us and empower our hearts to more fully pursue a lifestyle of prayer and daily communion with Jesus.

“Blessed are those who listen to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway (Pr. 8:34).”

1. Let’s Talk to Him All Day Long:

Since this is our objective we will spend this last session looking at how we can engage Him more and seek to stay in conversation with Him throughout our days; being intentional to set aside our thoughts and to spend time actually talking to the invisible God all day long.

*“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus (1Th. 5:16-18).”*

1. The Promise for Those Who do:

He wants for us to call out to Him and He says that when we do He will hear us and respond. He exhorts us to call on Him, to wait on Him constantly and to listen for Him to speak. The more we cry out the more He will respond to us.

*“Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion…Blessed are all who wait for him!...How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you...Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it (Is. 30:18-21).”*