

With His Friend

All You Need is Love: Pt.3

We're doing a brief series on who God is. You say, "Anthony, I thought we were doing a brief series on love." Well, that's correct too. You see the Bible says that "God is love" and so to understand what love is, we need to understand who God is. The thesis of the series is that God is a complex character, like any real person. And the Bible says He's Father *and* Friend *and* Lover *and* King. And if we elevate any one of these images - any one of these metaphors that God Himself uses to describe Himself - if we elevate one to the exclusion of the other or even to greatly favor one over the other, we end up with a one-dimensional god, a cartoon god, a god we can't really have personal engagement with.

Now, the first two messages we took our text from the Psalms, today we're going a little further back. We're going to be in Exodus, the story of Moses and the Hebrew slaves and their journey to freedom. I want to tell you a story from chapters 33 and 34, but the reason I want to tell it revolves around **Exodus 33:11** where it says, "*The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks **with his friend.***" God's relationship with Moses was based on many things – again, God is a complex being – but among those things, it was based on friendship.

So considering that, let's ask, What is friendship with God? Why would God dare call Himself our friend? Let's ask the question of the text like this – three things. *Why* is friendship with God so important? Secondly, *what* it is. Lastly, *how* we can get it.

Let's get started with number one: **Why is friendship important?** Let me set the stage for us with some context from the opening verses of the chapter.

Exodus 33:7-11, "*Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the "tent of meeting." Anyone inquiring of the LORD would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. 8 And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent.*

9 As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the LORD spoke with Moses. 10 Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshiped, each at the entrance to his tent. 11 The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.

What is this about? When God first brought the children of Israel out of Egypt and to Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the plans for the tabernacle. And the tabernacle was to be a tent - the dwelling place of God - in the *midst* of the people. All of the other tents were around it. It was right in the middle of the people. And what is this pillar of cloud? It's the *glory* of God. In the daytime it looked like a cloud. At night it looked like a pillar of fire. It's the very presence of God. I won't go into the details, but the shorthand is, this is the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. You don't see the Holy Spirit as often in the Old Testament as you do in the New, but this is a big one.

Now, to understand what's going on in Exodus 33, we have to know what happened in Exodus 32 – imagine that, reading the Bible in context! Hint: you should *always* read the Bible in context. But the previous chapter tells the story of the Golden Calf. Do you know this story? Moses was up on Mt Sinai taking dictation from God – the 10 Commandments and all that. And when he came back down, he discovered that the people had gotten impatient – it's not good to get impatient with God – and they had thrown all their gold jewelry together to make an idol in the form of a calf and then they had a big rowdy party to worship this false god. It's like Moses walked out of church on Sunday morning...and directly into Rainey Street on Saturday night!

And God took that personally. After all, He had just done miracle after miracle to get these people out of Egypt and what do they do just *three months* later? They throw a wild party to give the credit to false idols. And so God says, “All right, change of plans. Because I keep *my* word, I'm still going let you get to the Promised Land. *But*, we're going to swap out your travel guide. I'm going to send an angel to lead you in my place.” Look at **Exodus 33:3**, “*Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way.*” Any dads who have made long road-trips with kids in the backseat understand.

So here's what's going on here. God says, “I'm going to send an angel with you to Canaan, and I'll drive out your enemies. I'll make you successful. I'll give you military power. I'll give you economic prosperity. *And*, if you want to know something from me, if you want guidance on some problem - what is the right way to do something - if you need ethical guidance or personal guidance, it's very simple...go to Moses. He will have access to the tent of my Glory. He can have access to my Presence. So if you have a need, you talk to him, he'll talk to me, and then he'll tell you.”

Now, this is pretty incredible. This is *exactly* the religion we've all been waiting for. On the one hand, everybody says, "This is what I want." First of all, God says, "I'll give you power. I'll give you prosperity. I'll give you success, *and* I'll give you a religious professional to deal with me so you don't have to deal with me personally." In other words, "I won't be right in the *middle* of your life where you have to kind of arrange everything around me. Oh no. When you need me, you can get me. When there's a crisis, you can call Moses, a religious professional, it's *his* job to be meeting with me all the time, so if you have a need, you go to him and he'll talk to me."

And this is the religion all kinds of people want. What a deal! God's power, God's success, and not actually having to deal with God right smack in the middle of your life – getting all up in your business. Instead, God when you need him. And there's a professional. Moses is our Louis Lane, he can get in touch with Superman when we really need him. What a deal. Look at what God says to Moses. **V.14**, "*The LORD replied, 'My Presence will go **with you**, and I will **give you** rest.'*"

Now, we need to notice something; who's the "you"? This is where it helps to know Hebrew, because in English, "you" can be singular or plural, right? That's why in the South we invented "ya'll".

But the "you" in v.14 is singular and it's directed to Moses. "The presence. The glory. The cloud. The meeting. *You'll* have it, Moses." And in the next verse, Moses says, "No thanks." It's one of the most incredible verses in all the Bible in my opinion. In fact, what I am about to read is my own personal favorite Bible verse.

Interesting timing, my wife got a Facebook notice last week that said that ten years ago, she was writing scriptures on this church floor. Before we laid the carpet down in here, we gathered everyone together – some of you were here – and we took black markers and wrote our favorite scriptures on the concrete. We wanted to symbolize that the Word of God is the foundation of our church.

So if you were to rip up this stage, you would find what I wrote directly under where I knew I would be preaching every Sunday. This is my life verse as your pastor – as the Moses representing, "religious professional" for our congregation. It's **Exodus 33:15-16**, "*Then Moses said to him, 'If your Presence does not go with us, **do not send us up from here.** How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people **unless you go with us?** What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?'"*

This is amazing. Here's what Moses is saying, "You can keep your success. You can keep your power. You can keep your guidance. You can keep the whole thing. If *we* don't have access to your presence - if the *whole* people of God don't have friendship with you - if they don't *all* have access to your presence smack in the middle of their lives, if they're not *all* actually able to *meet* you - the Tent of "Meeting" - we don't want anything else."

And this wasn't just Moses' idea, by the way. The people themselves, when they heard God say He would send an angel with them but would not go Himself, it says **v.4**, "*When the people heard these distressing words, they began to mourn and no one put on any ornaments.*"

Now, you know the children of Israel are kind of like the apostles. The children of Israel in the Old Testament and the apostles in the New Testament are sort of like the Three Stooges...they never quite get it right. They learn a lesson one day, and they forget it the next. Just constantly going back and forth. So they're not spiritual giants - right? - and yet *they* know that to have God's power, to have God's teaching, to have all that and not have God's *friendship* - to not actually know Him personally, to have His presence - is not to have anything. Now, let me ask you a quick question.

Do you see even the children of Israel at this stage in their lives, and certainly Moses, know there's *nothing* more important than this, than knowing God personally? **Jeremiah 9:23–24**, a famous place where it says, "*This is what the Lord says: "Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me..."*"

What does that mean? God is saying there in Jeremiah "If you're a professor at Harvard (the wise), if you win five Olympic gold medals (the strong), if you're a Wall Street wiz making \$30 million a year, (the rich)..." Think of the approval, think of the honor, think of the satisfaction, and God says, "Oh rich, oh mighty, oh wise, that's *nothing* compared to what it's like to know me."

So let me ask you a quick question. Have you settled for this kind of religion? The kind of religion the children of Israel rejected? Have you settled for a god you only need when you're in trouble? That's when you go get him, but normally he's not in the middle of your life? Or you come to church, and you look to professionals like me to go meet with God and come back and tell you what to do, but you yourself *never* have a sense that you're really meeting Him, really conversing with Him, really touching Him. Is there an exchange? Do you feel like you're personally dealing with God? Do you have a personal interaction with God? In prayer? In studying God's word?

Do you see yourself as a priest who can go into the very presence of God? Or have you kind of settled for the “in case of emergency break glass” god? Don’t you see why it’s so important? It’s *so* important. It’s astounding. What is Moses saying? He says, “If we don’t have access to You, if we don’t *all* have friendship with You, God, You can take all your money and all your power and all your success and everything else. You just have it. We don’t want it. Do not take us up from here. We’d rather just sit here in the desert and die.” That’s amazing! But that’s how important it is.

Now, secondly, What is it? If that’s so important, what is it? Well, this passage is presented – especially v.12 and following - as a give and take conversation between friends. That’s what we read in v.11 when it says God spoke to Moses face to face. They were friends. And so what follows is a case study of friendship. There’s a deep analogy between human friendship and divine friendship. Human friendship and divine friendship work very similarly. Not completely, of course, but very similar. So let’s look at three principles here for building a friendship with God - or with *anybody* actually. Here’s what we learn. Three things. Friends often come around, always let you in, and never let you down. Let’s go through those three.

First of all, friends often come around. Moses’ whole issue is, “I want your presence.” It’s not enough just to have your blessings, your protection, your favor, I – and we – want you *presence*. Well what is that? It’s the Hebrew word *paniym*, which means “face”. Every place in the Hebrew Scriptures where you see the English word “presence”, it’s that same Hebrew word “face”.

God is saying, “I have a face.” One of the things that’s very important to realize is if you want to have a friendship, you have to actually be face-to-face sometimes. You *often* have to come around. You often have to hang out. I mean it’s fine to text for quick communication. It’s *better* to talk on the phone directly. But think of the difference between a phone call and...FaceTime. They even put it in the name of the app! We need face time – presence time!

And this pandemic has shown us starkly the limitations of *only* distant communication. I mean, thank God for FaceTime, thank God for Zoom, but we are learning it does not completely do away with the need for more intimate connection. Those of you who did a Connect Group on Zoom know it wasn’t quite the same as all sitting together in a living room.

I can text you, “Running late for lunch”. I can email you, “Here are my initial thoughts on this proposal.” I can call you and talk about strategy.” But the closer I get to conflict, the closer it needs to be to face-to-face. Why? Face-to-face relationship engages all the senses. See, not even Zoom puts you fully in the presence of another. It’s hard to read body language when I don’t even know if you’re wearing pants or not! Sometimes you need to do more than to hear and see. You need to touch. You can hug. You can kiss. You can shake hands. Do you see?

Whereas every other way of relating to somebody...They’re okay. They’re good. In fact, they’re very important for maintaining friendships, but they only ever engage one sense. Right? Email or phoning or the video service. You can’t hug. You can hug the screen, but it won’t work. So what are we talking about here?

First of all, you’re not going to really have friendship if you never see each other. There has to be physical proximity. You have to often come around. But what we learn here is God, though He is *everywhere* - Right? God is everywhere, that’s what omnipresent means - and yet God has a face. This boggles the mind a bit because since God is a *spirit*, so it’s not a physical face.

You say, “Uh, what other kind is there?” All right. Well just think about it. What we just said. Why is face-to-face relationship so much better than any other kind? Because when you’re face-to-face, *all* the senses are engaged and the relationship moves ahead so much faster than any other way. This is why – even jobs that are always online - many will have retreats or gatherings every so often where the team members can physically be together.

So to say “God has a face” is a way of saying God has presence where you can relate to Him. That’s why I said in the beginning that God’s presence is the same thing as the Holy Spirit. Let me put it like this. The presence of God is when and where *He* fills up your senses. The presence of God is when and where things that were just intellectual, things you just knew about, come *down* on your heart, *touch* your heart, *press down* on you.

One of my favorite examples comes from the journals of Jonathan Edwards – to my mind the greatest American theologian, it’s either him or MLK. But listen to what he records in his diary:

“Once as I rode out into the woods for my health in 1737, having alighted from my horse in a retired place, as my manner commonly has been, to walk for divine contemplation and prayer, **I had a view, that for me was extraordinary, of the glory of the Son of God,** as Mediator between God and man, and his wonderful, great, full, pure and sweet grace and love and meek, gentle condescension.”

This grace that appeared so calm and sweet appeared also great above the heavens. The person of Christ appeared ineffably excellent, with an excellency great enough to swallow up all thought and conception— which continued, as near as I can judge, about an hour; which kept me the greater part of the time in a flood of tears, and weeping aloud.” (Works, I, p. xlvi)

What happened? He *saw*, he says. Christ *appeared*. I believe what Edwards encountered was the move of the Holy Spirit. As a Pentecostal I have experienced this same thing myself from time to time. Edwards elsewhere talks about “religious affections”. Getting into the presence of God. The presence of God is the place where things you knew *about* - like the glory of God or the grace of God or the holiness of God – you now *sense*.

“What do you mean *sense*?” We don’t “know” exactly. You have to use sensory language to describe it. Edwards himself says in a spot, “It’s one thing to *know* honey is sweet. It’s quite another to *taste* it on your tongue.” It’s one thing to know God is holy. It’s another thing to *meet* God, to sense His holiness on your heart and on your life. There’s no other way to put it. The Bible talks in that language all the time, and *that* is the presence of God. There is a place, there is a means, there is a situation in which things you knew about become real to you, and *God* becomes real to you. You’re talking with Him “face-to-face” as it were.

Some of you know what I’m talking about. If you are a friend of God, you *know* there’s such a thing as the presence of God. See, what’s the difference between a friend of God and just a general person who believes in God, comes to church, gets us religious professionals to tell them the truth and all that? Friends of God know that God has a face. Friends of God know there’s the presence. Friends of God do everything they can to get into that presence.

You can’t *always* have it, just like friends can’t *always* be with you. Right? Friends are not with you *all* the time, not usually. See? But friends often come around. In the same way, if you’re a friend of God and God is your friend – oh, God is always your friend – but sometimes you *sense* His presence; sometimes you *meet* Him.

Secondly, friends always let you in. Transparency. You’re not a friend unless both of you are vulnerable with each other. In fact, you’re not friends unless both of you are telling secrets to each other. Friends tell secrets. Friends talk frankly to one another. I can speak very directly to my true friends because there’s a trust level there. I don’t have to wear a mask when I’m around them.

See, there are two men in the Hebrew Scriptures in the Old Testament who are called “friends of God”, Abraham and Moses. And in both cases, you have these spots where you see Moses and Abraham going *at* God a little in some amazing ways, being extremely frank – oh, being respectful - but being very frank. This place right here where Moses comes and says, “I am not satisfied with this situation,” where does he get that kind of directness? Huh?

Go back to Abraham, who is another one who is called a friend of God, and we have an astounding example of this, where he knows God is on his way to judge Sodom and Gomorrah, and Abraham says, “You wouldn’t judge Sodom and Gomorrah if there were 50 godly people there, would you?” God says, “No. I wouldn’t.” “How about 45?” “No,” God said, “I wouldn’t do it for 45.” “What about 40? How about 30? How about 20? Could I interest you in 10?” My Rabbi friend says this is where Abraham “Jewed God down.” I didn’t say that! My Rabbi said that!

You can read the story for yourself in Genesis 18, and it’s outlandish! You go, “What *is* this? Who talks to God like this?” A friend does. See, here’s the thing. When you go to a friend, you don’t have to be too polished. You trust your friend to know your faults and accept you anyway. You trust your friend to put the very, very best spin on what you’re doing, don’t you?

When you see Abraham and when you see Moses, they don’t know *how* a holy God could love them this much and accept them this much, but they are *utterly* secure before the face of God. Utterly! Enormous security. Complete frankness. They’re vulnerable. They let it all out. So on the one hand a friend talks frankly. But on the other hand, you’re not a friend if *you’re* the one who is always talking and your friend listens, and that’s all that ever happens. *You* have to listen.

You can see it right here. Where does Moses get his understanding of who God is? He doesn’t just think it up. He *listens* to the word of God. Before you get to the Golden Calf in chapter 32, there’s been 13 straight chapters of just Moses *listening* to God. **Psalm 25:14** is one of those rare places where the King James Version gets closer to the point than the modern translations; it says, “*The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; And he will show them his covenant.*”

What that means is if you fear God - which don’t forget is not “fear” like just to be scared, but it’s like to look over the edge of the Grand Canyon in awe and wonder, “Yikes, this is big!” - if you come before God in awesome wonder and you submit and say, “I’m going to listen to you. I’m going to accept what you say,” God will tell you secrets. What does that mean?

Well, they're open secrets, of course, but they weren't things you saw *before*. The language of someone who is really *engaged* with God at the moment goes like this. You're reading the Scripture and it lights up and you say, "Wait, if God's like *that*, why am I worried? If *this* is true, why am I scared? If this is true, why am I tempted? If this true, why am I despondent? And why haven't I ever *seen* this before?" God is telling you secrets.

Through the Holy Spirit, God is showing you things that are secret *to you*. You've never seen them before – even though you may have been a Christian a long time. Listen, I've read the Bible *in it's entirety* several times through. And yet, I constantly read things and say, "I've never *seen* that before!" It happens in preaching too. Sometimes one of you will come up after service and say, "Pastor, when you said..." And I'm thinking, "I don't remember saying that." That's the Holy Spirit using the Word of God to let you in on some truth.

So friends often come around, always let you in and...Thirdly, friends never let you down. "That's interesting," people say. "Never let you down? What does that mean?" I have another great Jonathan Edwards quote that perfectly explains this. Sorry, to be so 18th century today. But look at this...**[Play Rick rolled clip :17]**.

You got Rick Rolled! In church! But Rick is just singing God's song. "Never gonna give you up, never gonna let you down, never gonna turn around and desert you."

Now I know a lot of people who complain and say, "Well, God didn't stick with me. God did *not* stick with me. I prayed for this and I prayed for that, and He abandoned me. God let me down." Well, let me tell you a secret about friendship with God. If you're God's friend, you stick with Him even when it *looks* like He has abandoned you.

What if you have a really close friend and you hear something very negative about your close friend? What do you usually do? You say, "That doesn't sound like my friend at all." You doubt it. Of course, friends are imperfect, human beings are imperfect, but without some substantial proof, you doubt it. Why? You're friends. You want to find out for yourself. What you're hearing doesn't square with what else you know about them.

If you're a friend of God, you stick with Him even when it seems like He has abandoned you, and you will eventually find that God has *not* abandoned you a bit. The only way to find out that God has really stuck with you perfectly is for you to stick with Him, even imperfectly. That's a friend.

What is friendship with God? Friends of God know there's a presence, they completely open up because they know God accepts, and they *listen submissively* to His Word. The Holy Spirit shows you who God is and relates it to who you are, and then you sense His presence, and then you sense you're there. And friends stick together, and God sticks with you.

In fact, one of the biggest parts of being a friend is over the years to see that if I really, really *assume* God has not abandoned me, I'll eventually find that He hasn't in the slightest. It's the old Joseph in Potiphar's prison story: It sure *looked* like God had abandoned him, but God was working out some things for Joseph's future that he could never understand in that moment. And if I assume God has abandoned me - if I don't stick with Him - I won't *see* the things He's doing in my life and my friendship with Him won't grow. So that's what friendship with God is - what it looks like. Friends often come around, always let you in, and never let you down.

Third, How do we receive it? I want to show you something very interesting about this back and forth exchange between God and Moses. God tells Moses that He's not going with the people. Moses tells God, "Ok, then I don't want to go either. Let's just stay here in the desert, because I don't want your Promised Land without your Presence." And here's what's

next, **Exodus 33:17-18**, "*And the LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name." Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."*"

I want to make a t-shirt that has a picture of the two tablets on it and says, "Moses really had some stones." I think that would sell! The *moxie* on this guy, right? God just changed...His...mind! Because Moses asked him too. And then Moses is like, "And another thing...!" Only a friend could get away with that. And again, God is like, "Ok." But it's very interesting and I want to read you the full passage.

Exodus 33:19-23, "*And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."* 20 But," he said, "***you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.***"

21 Then the LORD said, "*There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. 22 When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. 23 Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.*"

Now right away, because you're an intelligent bunch, somebody is already thinking, "How come in v.11 it says they spoke face-to-face, and in v.20 God says, 'Nobody can see my face and live?'" And the answer is Moses had *some* access, but he didn't have the *whole* thing. God says, "Because I'm holy, we can't be *completely* vulnerable friends – you couldn't handle it - *but* I'll put you in the rock and let my glory pass by, and then you'll be safe."

So what bears the brunt of that consuming fire of God's glory? What gets the heat, and what gets the light? What protects Moses? The rock. And centuries later, the Apostle Paul would make an astonishing claim in his letter to the Corinthian church, he says that rock in the wilderness...was Christ. That means that Moses' rock...was the pre-incarnate second-person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ the Son of God. But that meant Moses didn't just have a rock, but he had the ultimate friend as well.

And here's why. The Bible tells us Jesus Christ did not come as a teacher and save us with his teaching. If Jesus Christ had just come and said, "Do this, this, this, and this," that wouldn't have saved us, would it? Because we could never live up to that. This week in my Bible reading plan I was in the Sermon on the Mount and several times as I listened I thought, "Uh oh!" And *I'm* the professional Christian remember?!

So Jesus did *not* save us with his teaching. What did he save us with? He saved us with his friendship, because Jesus did the three friendship things...in the *ultimate* way.

First of all, Jesus came around. He was incarnate. The Christmas story. He was born in a manger. He had to come to us. Secondly, Jesus let us in. He was utterly vulnerable. In fact, Christians have the only religion that even *claims* God became vulnerable, that even claims God became weak, that even claims that. And that changed the world.

All around the world, when you come like this [arms open] toward an enemy, what does this mean? Friendship. It's a token of friendship. Why? Because you've made yourself vulnerable. If you walk toward an enemy like this, you are saying, "I want friendship," but the only way you're going to show them you want friendship is you make yourself vulnerable. Right? They could nail you. Jesus' arms are open to us. They were *nailed* open. How much more vulnerable do you want to get?

Jesus saved us with our friendship because he came to us personally, in the flesh, he was vulnerable for us...and Jesus stuck with us. Jesus didn't let us down, even when things got rough.

John 15:13 says “*Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.*” Jesus was already our friend, but on the cross he became the greatest friend. The ultimate friend. There’s a hymn called “Ten Thousand Angels”

He could have called ten thousand angels
To destroy the world and set Him free.
He could have called ten thousand angels,
But He died alone, for you and me.

Jesus could have left, but in the greatest act of friendship in the history of the world, he *stayed*. Jesus saved us through the ultimate friendship – and because Jesus Christ was our ultimate Friend, we can be friends with God. And as a result, let me tell you why you need to be in a Connect Group – they start this week, have you signed up yet? You need to and here’s why. *Because* Jesus saved us with friendship, not with his teaching, the *main* way in which you grow into God - in fact, the main way in which you *meet* God - is through friends. There’s a deep symbiotic relationship between human friendship and divine friendship. What do I mean by that?

On the one hand, 99 times out of 100, you find God through other friends. Philip brings Nathanael to Jesus. Right? Andrew brings Peter to Jesus. Anybody, practically, in this room who ever found Christ or is in the process of finding Christ probably is doing it through friends. I’m a teacher. I’m help, but basically it won’t happen without friends.

In fact, if you don’t have friends to help you process the stuff I’m saying week in and week out, you’re not going to *get* to God. But not only that. Not only does friendship bring us to God, but God brings us to friends, because how are *you* going to be a great friend, how are *you* going to be transparent, when you’re scared what they think of you?

But what if you have the ultimate Friend who loves you no matter what? No matter what! Then, you have the freedom to be transparent. You don’t need their approval. Do you see? When people kind of let you down, are a fair-weather friend to you - do you stick with them? Well, how can you do that unless you see you have the ultimate Friend who never will let you down? So then you have the freedom. You’re not as *needy* as you were before.

You won’t be a great friend until you **have** the ultimate Friend, and you generally won’t **find** the ultimate Friend, except through **having** friends. How do you like that? You know, as good as worship is - you’ve come to hear the paid professional. Moses has gone to the Tent of Meeting and comes out and tells you what you need to hear - but I’ll tell you where you’re really going to *learn* friendship with God. It’s with other people in a group in which you can talk about *how* the Lord has, through the Holy Spirit, spoken to who you are with who He is.

You get some good things by coming on Sunday morning and sitting in rows – this is an important part of discipleship. But you won't get friendships. A five minute chat in the foyer over coffee does not a friendship make. I've had people leave the church and tell me, "We just don't have any friends here." And they haven't been in a Connect Group, they've haven't brought their kids to youth group. They've show up for service once or twice a month maybe. That's not how friendships develop.

In school, you didn't make friendships at lectures – you made friendships in study groups. There are things you can do in circles that you just can't do in rows. And making friends is one of them. How has that happened for you? Friendship is very personal. Friendship is very deep. Friendship is something you *work* on and it takes a time commitment.

You'll never have great friendships if you just sit home and watch Netflix and order all your groceries delivered to your door. Jesus left his home and *sacrificed* for the sake of friendship. Why is it going to be different for you? People want to be like Jesus...but don't want to do what Jesus *did*. And Jesus spent his life hanging around a group of 12 annoying guys. Oh, he had his time with the crowds. Oh he had his times of solitude.

But he took time to develop relationships with people who on the last night of his life, he would call his friends. "I no longer call you servants, but friends."

And guess what? He wants to call *you* his friend this morning. He wants nothing more than to come into your life, to confide the secrets of the universe in your soul, and never, never, never let you down. What a friend we have in Jesus. What a friend indeed.

Let's pray...