



Parkway Fellowship

Won't You Be My Neighbor? • Making New Friends in a New Place • Luke 5:1-11, 27-32 • 09/16/2018

Main Point

We must be intentional to take the initiative in friendships in order to walk more closely with Christ as God intends.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What are the top three qualities you look for in a friend?

When it comes to making new friends, do you typically take the initiative, or do you let other people come to you? Why?

What would you say is the purpose of friendship?

For some people, making friends comes easily, while others of us struggle with it. Either way, all of us need to understand what the ultimate purpose of friendship is if we are going to make and keep friends well. In today's session, we'll take a look at Jesus' approach to making new friends in Luke 5 to find principles that apply to our own friendships today.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Invite a volunteer to read Luke 5:1-7.

Which is typically your focus in your daily schedule: people or projects? What was Jesus' focus? How do you know?

Name some reasons Jesus could have chosen to leave Simon and the others after verse 3. Why do you think He didn't?

What principles about making friends can you learn from these verses?

At this point in His ministry, Jesus was consistently teaching and preaching, and His popularity was growing rapidly. Still, Jesus was never too busy to connect on a personal level with those around Him. Instead of heading home for a nap or stepping back onto the shore to heal the sick, Jesus led Simon further out on the lake. There, Jesus met the physical needs of the men whose boat He had borrowed to teach the crowd. Like we learned in this week's message, God has already put people in place to become our friends. However, we have to be intentional about reaching out in those opportunities. Friendship takes initiative, and an investment of time and attention.

| Invite a volunteer to read Luke 5:8-11.

Why did Simon Peter try to push Jesus' friendship away? Did Peter think he had anything in common with Jesus? Why not? From verses 10-11, what did they have in common after all?

Have you ever avoided friendship with a person you thought was too "good" for you, or not "good" enough? What do we lose out on when we do that?

Agree or disagree with the following statement: Friendship requires vulnerability. Explain.

From Jesus' words in verse 10 and the response of the fishermen in verse 11, what is the ultimate purpose of friendship? How does this truth impact your understanding of what it takes to make and be a friend?

Simon Peter fell at Jesus' feet—a sign of submission and desperation. He addressed Jesus as Lord. Here, the Greek word indicates Simon was acknowledging Jesus' authority. The presence of the Lord in His holiness brings recognition and conviction of personal sin. Simon asked Jesus to depart, not because he was afraid of Jesus' power, but because Simon was aware he was a sinful man. When Jesus made friends, however, He wasn't looking for things identical, like occupation, upbringing, or interests; He was looking for things in common. Specifically, Jesus was looking for people with hearts to follow the Lord and make disciples. We must remember—the ultimate point of friendship is to walk with Christ together.

Invite a volunteer to read Luke 5:27-32.

What steps did Jesus take to form a friendship with Levi? What steps did Levi take to form a friendship with Jesus?

What differences could have kept Jesus and Levi from a friendship? Why didn't those differences get in the way of their forming a friendship?

On Sunday we heard, "Jesus chooses, I don't decide." Based on verse 27, would you say Jesus decided Levi would make a good friend, or God chose Levi as a friend for Jesus?

What did the Pharisees and scribes miss out on because of their narrow view of friendship?

What life purpose would you say drove the attitudes and choices of the religious leaders?

What life purpose drove Jesus' attitude and choices? How does your life purpose impact your attitudes and choices in your friendships?

No one would have picked Levi as someone who would be among Jesus' closest group of friends. The two were so different—it would be like a respected pastor hanging out with a known thief. But unlike the religious leaders, Jesus was not fazed by the fact that Levi was a tax collector. He chose Levi anyway, and in doing so, Jesus found in Levi a faithful apostle and friend. Jesus did not exclude anyone because He loves people and wants everyone to come into His kingdom. Because of this, Jesus spent time with people who didn't fit any particular category of personality, interest, or background. Jesus was a friend to sinners, consistently showing them love and calling them to repentance.

Friendship requires sacrifice. Levi left a life of easy money to follow Jesus. Levi most likely had a lot of material possessions to leave behind as well, yet he gladly gave them up for the opportunity to follow Jesus. After he left everything to follow Jesus, Levi threw a banquet for Jesus and invited all of his friends to sit and eat with Jesus. Levi didn't try to keep his new friend Jesus separate from his work friends, because friendship is inclusive.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Which of the following is hardest for you: taking initiative in friendship, including other people in friendship, sacrificing things for friendship, being vulnerable in friendship, being intentional in making friends, or investing time and attention for friendship? Explain.

Would you say your friends help you walk more closely with the Lord? Would your friends say you help them walk more closely with the Lord?

What people has God has already put in place to be your friends (i.e. neighbors, coworkers, parents of your kids' teammates, etc.)? What principles of friendship do you need to put into practice for making new friends and for growing in your current friendships?

Pray

Thank God for His friendship to you. Ask Him to show you ways you can reach out to make new friends and be a better friend to others, so that you might walk more closely with Christ with the people He has put in your life.

Commentary

| Luke 5:1-11, 27-32

5:1-3. This chapter of Luke illustrates responses of those who acknowledge Jesus and accept His authority. The first example features a defining moment for Simon Peter, James, and John as they responded to Jesus' call by leaving everything to follow Him.

5:4. While addressing the crowd, Jesus had focused on teaching. When He finished speaking, He turned His attention to individuals. Jesus instructed Simon to move the vessel into deep water and there to lower the nets for a catch. At first glance we might think Jesus planned to repay Simon for use of the craft by giving the fisherman a large catch of fish. However, Jesus' intention for Simon's life was far greater.

5:5-6. Simon called Jesus Master. The Greek word translated Master is different from the word Peter used in verse 8 for "Lord." The use of these two words marks the way Simon's view of Jesus was affected by the miracle described in verses 6-7. Simon noted the fishermen had labored hard all night without results. Perhaps the men might have laughed if anyone else had told them how and where to fish. However, Simon's obedience displayed his respect for Jesus' authority. Imagine the fishermen's surprise when they caught such a great number of fish that their nets were inadequate for the weight and began to tear. Until now, they may have cooperated more out of indulgence than belief that they would catch many fish by following Jesus' instructions.

5:7-8. Even when the fishermen in the second boat joined the effort, so many fish were in both boats that they began to sink. The fish harvest was so great that it not only was too much for the nets but also overwhelmed the capacity of the small fishing boats common to the lake. The fishermen immediately recognized the miraculous nature of this experience. Simon Peter fell at Jesus' knees, a sign of submission and pleading. He addressed Jesus as Lord. Here the Greek word indicates Simon was acknowledging Jesus' authority. The presence of the Lord in His holiness brings recognition of personal sin. Simon asked Jesus to depart, not because he was afraid of Jesus' power, but because Simon was aware he was a sinful man. Confronted with His holiness, many sinners want to avoid God.

5:10-11. Simon and his companions were not the only ones amazed. James and John, who had come up in the other boat (see v. 7), also responded with astonishment at the power of Christ. Luke identified James and John as Zebedee's sons. The two would join Simon Peter in the inner circle of Christ's followers. When the fishermen obeyed Jesus' instructions (and at least Simon Peter probably did so reluctantly), they caught more fish than their nets or boats could handle. Simon then recognized and acknowledged Jesus as the Lord. Although Jesus' invitation was addressed to Simon, it obviously was also meant for James and John. Luke noted the inclusiveness of the response in the plural pronoun they. Simon and his crew in one boat and James and John in the second boat brought the boats to land. Partners in commercial fishing, these three along with Andrew were to become partners in following Jesus.

5:27-28. One day Jesus encountered Levi. The rebel with a cause against religious power structures met the man who represented foreign power structure at its worse—a man whose profession was to collect money for the Romans. Luke took up the Markan call narrative refrain: Follow me (Mark 1:17). Levi showed how to join the proper power structure. He left everything he had—his profession, his profits, and his personal identity. He followed Jesus.

5:29-30. Following meant more than just wandering the countryside listening to Jesus teach and preach. Following meant using your influence and skills for Jesus. Levi left the tax table to invite people to the supper table. Following Jesus meant telling others what Jesus had done for him. The others were friends Levi had known for a long time—not new acquaintances formed for convenience and prosperity.

5:31-32. In typical Jewish teacher fashion, Jesus cited a proverb to emphasize his message. Wellness did not drive people to the doctor. Illness did. Jesus was the spiritual doctor. He came with a message of repentance. That message seemed misdirected. It did not save Israel and the Middle East, where political confusion reigned. It saved those religious leaders considered unworthy of God's attention. Power began to reveal true positions in life. Who was sick? The tax collector's friends, people willing to work for the Roman government and thus against Israel? Or religious leaders who knew more about God than God did? The title Righteous One given them by humans was the only title they would ever receive. Jesus picked out the lowest social positions as the positions through which he would work.