



Parkway Fellowship

Won't You Be My Neighbor? • When New Friends Become Great Friends •
Job 2:11-13; 3:24-26; Proverbs 17:17; Galatians 6:2; Philippians 2:4 • 09/23/2018

Main Point

Christian friendship goes beyond the surface, choosing to become involved in the lives of others even in desperate times.

Introduction

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

How many close friends do you have: 0-2, 3-5, 6 or more?

In your experience, what are the greatest contributing factors involved in forming deep friendships?

**Which would you say takes more work—making new friends or developing deep friendships?
Explain.**

We live in a culture where technology makes it easy for people to go a mile wide and only an inch deep in relationships. It takes effort and intentionality to get involved in people's lives. Church is a great place to do that, and a natural part of Christian community. Today we'll take a look at Job's experience, as well as several other Scripture passages to see why we need close friendships and what it takes to form them.

Understanding

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

| Ask a volunteer to read Job 2:11-13; 3:24-26.

Is there any experience in your life in which you can relate to Job's words in Job 3:24-26? Do you think God intends for any person in that type of despair to face it alone? Explain.

From Job 2:11-13, why did Job's friends go to him?

What stands out to you about how they showed friendship to Job in this situation?

It's not that Job's friends had all the right words. It's clear from the rest of Job's account they didn't! But when they heard their friend was suffering, they went to him. They empathized with Job, literally joining him in his grief. And before they started saying all the wrong things we know them for most, they sat in silence with their friend for a full week. In the depths of despair, Job wasn't alone. He didn't know he'd need friends to comfort and support him in this way, but when he did, they were there.

In this week's sermon you heard these three steps to be a great friend in desperate times: "Be present. Don't try to fix it or explain it. Think God's plans, not my people." Would you characterize those steps as generally simple or difficult? How do these three steps counter the fears that often keep us from reaching out to our friends who are hurting?

| Ask a couple of volunteers to read Proverbs 17:17 and Galatians 6:2.

Put Proverbs 17:17 in your own words.

What is the law of Christ? How do we fulfill the command to love people like we love ourselves (Matt. 22:36-40)?

How do these two verses help define what true friendship really looks like?

The meaning of Jesus' second greatest command in Matthew 22 is echoed throughout Scripture. Paul further expressed its practical application in Galatians 6, and the writer of Proverbs 17 helps us know it's what we are created for. Loving others by bearing their burdens isn't simply a choice we have—it's who we are as image bearers of God.

What is the relationship between what Job's friends did in Job 2:11-13 and Proverbs 17:17?

What commonality do you see between Job 2:11-13 and Galatians 6:2?

| Ask a volunteer to read Philippians 2:3-4.

Can a person be a friend to another person and not live out Philippians 2:3-4? Explain.

Finish the following sentence: “Looking to the interests of other people requires that I...”

This passage goes on to express Christ’s attitude and actions as a model for our relationships. From Jesus’ example, what would you say you need to do for new friends to become great friends?

Paul’s words here have serious implications for Christian friendships. They imply that if we do not get involved in people’s lives, we’re not following Jesus’ example. Instead, we’re showing a priority of selfish concerns. As Job’s example shows us, we never know when we’re going to struggle and need close friends. However, we can know when we should invest in the lives of other people—we should get involved in other people’s lives right now.

Application

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

What are some hang-ups you have about getting involved in other people’s lives?

We heard many great next steps for practical application in the sermon this week. What is one practical step you can take to deepen your Christian friendships (i.e. increase my exposure to Christ-following friends, become a follower of Jesus, be present with people when they need me, resist fixing it or trying to explain why things happen to other people, etc.)?

How are we doing as a group at becoming and being great friends to one another? How can we do better?

Pray

Thank God for His friendship to you and for Christ’s example of how to love other people and consider their needs above your own. Ask Him to help you move past your hang-ups about getting involved in people’s lives and to better demonstrate biblical love and friendship.

Commentary

| Job 2:11-13

2:11 Eliphaz came from Teman, a principle city in Edom. Bildad probably came from the tribe of Shuah, descended from Abraham through his second wife Keturah. Zophar may have been from northern Arabia.

2:12-13 Job’s three friends responded to his gruesome appearance with actions symbolic of deep mourning: weeping (2Sam 18:33), tearing their robes (Job 1:20), sitting on the ground (Lam 2:10; Nah 1:4), and

throwing dust on their heads (Jos 7:6; 2Sam 13:19). With due propriety Job's friends remained silent, waiting for Job to speak first. It is often best in sympathizing with those who are hurting just to be there and to be ready to listen.

| Job 3:24-26

3:24. Through this excruciating ordeal Job experienced a loss of appetite. Turning away from food, Job lamented, "For sighing comes to me instead of food; my groans pour out like water." The physical side effects caused by his depression would continue to haunt him until he recovered (cp. Job 6:7; 33:20).

3:25-26. Further, Job noted, "What I feared has come upon me." This is not a reference to anything in particular but to suffering in general. Job also declared, "What I dreaded has happened to me." This is a reference to the anxiety that had come upon him because of the loss of his beloved children, servants, possessions, and his own health. A growing panic had flooded his heart, replacing the peace he once knew. Job ended this sorrowful mourning by noting his loss of peace, quietness, and rest. Job was a devastated man.

| Proverbs 17:17

The purpose of a brother is to uphold a family member in a difficult time. The Hebrew word can be used generally of relatives (Gen 13:8; 29:15; Jdg 14:3). An unlikely but possible interpretation is that a friend is better because he loves at all times, not just in difficult times.

| Galatians 6:2

Rather than exhibit destructive attitudes and actions (see Gal. 5:26), Christians are to help one another. Paul again addressed the Galatian believers as brothers, signaling a new topic but also emphasizing their spiritual kinship and his warm feeling for them. He gave the example of someone who was caught in a wrongdoing. Whatever the nature of the person's sin, spiritual believers are to restore the individual. He urged any believer engaged in restoration to have a gentle spirit rather than a harsh, judgmental attitude. The word "gentle" has the idea of strength under control (see on 5:22); the restorer is to be firm but kind. Paul then exhorted believers to carry one another's burdens. The word "burdens" refers to loads too heavy to bear alone. It could indicate oppressive loads in general but well may have referred specifically to moral faults referenced in verse 1. The guilt and shame from such sins would be heavy loads. Believers, however, also struggle with other loads that threaten to overpower them. Helping shoulder others' heavy loads would fulfill the law of Christ.

| Philippians 2:3-4

These four habitual actions reveal themselves collectively through another four attributes. Rivalry or conceit recalls the problem Paul condemned (1:15,17). Humility, the antidote for wrong attitudes, results in considering others as more important. Additionally, humility considers the interests of others. Proper relationships include the contrast “not only but also.” Personal responsibilities demand consideration, but the concerns of others are equally important.