



Sermon Discussion Questions
09-29-24

Jessica Stafford (LOX); Rev. Trevor Johnston (LW); Interim Pastor Mitch Nazario (ESP)

Sermon Series: The Friends You Need
Week 3: Class 201 - Unfriending

1. ICE BREAKER:
2. Read our Scripture for this week, Proverbs 13:20:

"²⁰Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm."

What comes to your mind as you read this Scripture? Discuss your first impressions and observations.

3. In each of our lives, we have friends who fall into different "levels" of friendship. Though there are different ways to express this, in the message we looked at the levels of: strangers, acquaintances, casual friends, close friends and intimate friends.

Discuss these levels as a group and how you would define them and differentiate them. How are these levels seen in the life of Jesus? Which levels are considered "companions"?

4. Jesus was known as a friend of sinners. In fact, he was often criticized by the Pharisees for eating and spending time with the "wrong" people! Read Matthew 9:10-11, *"While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?'"*

What does it mean to you that Jesus is a friend of sinners? How are you engaging in relationships and friendships with people in your life who are not yet Christians? What challenges do you face with this idea?

5. The word “fools” is used throughout Scripture to depict different kinds of people who are unwise in the way they live. There are actually five types of fools: simple, silly, sensual, scornful, and steadfast.

Discuss what you remember about each type of fool. Without naming names, can you share any real life examples of people who you have encountered like this? Which of these fools do you see as being the most dangerous to your personal walk with God?

6. In a framework adapted from Craig Groeschel, we talked about two things that we can never let our friends do: 1) Distract us from God’s work in our lives; 2) Continually tempt us to sin.

Talk about these two “absolutes” in friendship. Do you agree or disagree with these rules? Have you had friendships in your life who distract you from God’s work or tempt you to sin? Share what that influence was like and how it affected your life and your faith.

7. The proverb says that a companion of fools will suffer harm. The meaning of this is more intense than just making life harder, but is more like destroy, shatter, and overcome.

As a group, talk about the different ways that the wrong friendships can destroy or harm parts of our lives. Consider your career, physical health, marriage, family, faith, etc. If you have seen this in your own life and are comfortable sharing, describe a real life example.

8. If we find that we need to ‘unfriend’ someone, one important step is to ensure that we have set boundaries. Lysa Terkeurst, author of *Good Boundaries and Goodbyes*, writes,

“Boundaries are simply clearly stated parameters that provide a safe structure for communication and the health of a relationship... We set boundaries so we know what to do when we very much want to love those around us really well without losing ourselves in the process...Remember all the work you've done to draw boundaries was not about controlling someone else's behavior. It's about paying attention and being honest about how someone's poor behavior and lack of responsibility is possibly controlling you.”

React to this quote. How does this help you understand boundaries and their purpose? Talk about some scenarios where you may need to set boundaries in a friendship.

9. Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5, *"But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people."*

Discuss this Scripture. Talk about the balance that we are called to hold between loving people who don't yet know Christ, while maintaining the boundaries in our closest friendships of having "nothing to do with such people." Why is it important to closely protect the relationships that have the most influence over us?

10. PRACTICE: We are formed for community, and so the people we choose to place closest to us have the ability to form, or de-form, us in the image of Christ. Take time as a group to ask God these three questions:

- Who do you want me to become?
- Are my friends helping or hindering my formation in Christ?
- What is a next step I need to take?