

Lesson 1: Ruth and Naomi (True friends bring friends to the Lord)

Have you ever noticed how some things just go together? I'm going to put a famous person on the screen and I want you to tell me who their best friend is.

Famous Friendship Quiz

Batman and _____ (Robin)
Cory and _____ (Sean/Topanga)
Shrek and _____ (Donkey)
Frodo and _____ (Sam)
Sherlock and _____ (Watson)
Lorelai and _____ (Rory) I think I just got my man card revoked.
Yogi and _____ (Booboo)
Gumby and _____ (Pokey)
R2-D2 and _____ (C3PO)
The Fresh Prince and _____ (Jazz/Jazzy Jeff)

There are some people that in your mind are always together. They're inseparable.

Tonight we're kicking off a brand new series and we thought, "What better time to do this than here on a Wednesday night with all of our friends?"

The series is called "Friendship Goals." In other words, what should we look for in our friendships? What kinds of friendships should we aspire to have? What does a real friendship look like? What does God want us to know about friendships?

I want you to turn in your Bibles tonight to Ruth 1. And btw, maybe Ruth is one of those names that in your mind you immediately pair up with someone else? Who? Naomi.

In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of

Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. 2 The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there.

Recap. Names, places, left because of famine. What is the religious culture like in these two areas? Bethlehem which is a city in Judah, and Judah one of the tribes of Israel. The people of the Lord dwelled there. Moab was a place where paganism was the norm.

3 But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. 4 These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years, 5 and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

Well this is kind of morbid. Naomi's family is gone. Her husband and her two sons die, and she's left with her two daughters in law. What's all this got to do with friendship? Continue on.

6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the Lord had visited his people and given them food.

Ooo, can I stop here for just a second? Remember there's a famine going on, and they've got to find food. Naomi hears about the food that her God is providing. By the way, how cool is this? Where does Naomi hear about this? Look at verse 6. In the fields of Moab. The people of Moab, a country where the Lord is not their God, are talking about the things that the God of Israel is doing. How He's providing for His people.

7 So she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. 8 But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return

each of you to her mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. 9 The Lord grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!" Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.

They pack up all of their stuff, getting ready to head back to the land of Judah (remember, originally Naomi is from Bethlehem), and Naomi says, "Hey. Listen, you girls have been good to me, but you can go back to your homeland. Go find a husband. And may God bless you!" And she kisses them goodbye and they have this big cry fest.

10 And they said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." 11 But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? 12 Turn back, my daughters; go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, 13 would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me." 14 Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

Naomi is pitiful. She says, "Hey, you're not bound to me anymore. I don't have any other sons for you to marry. All I'm really going to do for you is hold you back. Verse 13. Naomi even says, "It is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me." In other words, I'm really bitter at God for what's taken place, and the way it's affected you.

And verse 14. Cry fest #2. And Orpah kissed Naomi goodbye, but Ruth won't let go.

15 And she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods (remember Ruth and Orpah are from Moab. The

Moabites didn't serve the God of Israel.); return after your sister-in-law."

Let's step back for and remember who's saying this and who she's saying it to.

This is Ruth. A Moabite woman from a country that does not follow or serve the LORD, God of Israel. She grew up learning about other little g gods. Grew up in a home where the Word of God wasn't respected or lived out.

Maybe some of you can relate to that. Maybe you've grown up in a home where the Word of God wasn't loved, or, respected or lived out.

And so here's Ruth, this girl that didn't grow up with a love for God, and she marries into this family from Israel. A completely different religion. And now she's learning all about Him. She's learning many of the stories that read about in God's Word.

And so, now Ruth is really at a crossroads physically and spiritually.

Physically, she's making a decision about a friendship. What should she do? Should she leave Naomi, this woman that has been through enormous amounts of grief, or should she stay with her?

You ever had a friend that bailed on you when you needed them most? You were hurting and you needed help and they were nowhere to be found.

You ever had a friend that, when it came down to it, they really weren't your friend at all? Maybe they stabbed you in the back. Maybe they talked bad about you.

Maybe you've had a friend who started dating somebody and you started to see them unhealthy changes in them.

Maybe you watched a friend go do a dangerous path as they started hanging around some people at school that didn't have the best reputations. And there's probably a good reason for that by the way.

What kind of friend is Ruth going to be?

And this is a big moment spiritually for Ruth. She's married into this family with a different faith. Will she turn back to her gods and turn her back on the true and living God?

What's her faith made of?

Some of you might feel you're at that very same crossroads spiritually. Maybe you're standing at a point where you're getting find out what your faith is made of. Am I going to believe what I've grown up being taught or am I going to believe something different?

You've watched others (like Ruth watched Orpah) turn their backs on God and maybe you're struggling with that same idea, trying to decide if that's what you want to do, too.

And now it's your turn to decide: are you going to turn to God or turn your back on God?

Let's see what Ruth has to say. I love this beautiful statement she makes.

16 But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.
17 Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you."
18 And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.

Wow. Friendship goals. Before we dive into what she says here, let's just sort of state the obvious.

I'm going to put two statements on the screen that I think all of us will agree upon. Can we agree upon a couple of things? (Well, I'll show you what they are first.)

1. Friends are good to have.

Friends are good to have, right? Nobody likes being alone all of the time. Granted, sometimes you need your space. But you need your friends, too. Friends are good to have.

2. Not every friendship is good to have.

If all you're looking for is acceptance, I can promise you that someone out there will give it to you, but just because someone accepts you, doesn't mean that's a good thing.

OH MAN. CAN I SAY THAT AGAIN AND CAN YOU GUYS LIVE BY THAT FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE AND NEVER FORGET WHAT I JUST SAID?!?

Just because someone accepts you, doesn't mean that's a good thing.

You ever heard of these newfangled things called...gangs?

Well, these people love me! They've got my back. Yes, but they're also committing crimes and murdering people and stuff. Not every friendship is good to have.

Or how about cults?

These people love me! They accept me! Yes but they will also brainwash you and get you to do some weird stuff.

So those are my two statements. Friends are good to have, but not every friendship is healthy. Some friendships are not good to have.

But let's talk about Ruth and Naomi. You want to talk about a true friend. You want to talk about loyalty. Ruth and Naomi were the kind of friend that you'd want to have, and the kind of friend that you'd want to be.

Look with me again at verse 16. 16 But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go (where you lead I will follow, Gilmore Girls fans; or for you Gin Blossom's fans out there: "Anywhere you go, I'll follow you down."), and where you lodge I will lodge.

And here's the line I really want to zero in on: Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.

She says "Naomi, I'm with you. End of discussion. Wherever you're going, that's where I'm going."

Friendship goals. How did they have this kind of friendship?

I want to suggest to you that Ruth's faith was heavily influenced by Naomi's friendship.

Naomi's friendship was a selfless kind of friendship. It was one that put Ruth's needs above her own.

Where do we learn that kind of friendship? It's the kind of love that we are taught by the Lord our God.

Proverbs 17:17 A friend loves at all times...

Don't miss this: Christians (God's people) ought to be the best kind of friends in the world.

Why? Because we ought to love our friends with the love that God loves us. A love that is not self-seeking. It is one that puts other's needs above itself. A sacrificial love.

Remember the words of Christ? Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13 Naomi had a sacrificial love for her daughters. She wanted them to carry on with their lives and be happy.

Finally, Ruth says, "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God."

Ruth wanted to be connected with God and God's people because of Naomi.

Now that's powerful.

Do your friends want to know God because of you? Do your friends want to know other Christians because of you?

Joscelyn and Cantrell. Annette and Destiny. Ryan and Daniel.

A true friend wants to show people the Lord and wants people to know the Lord.

I'm thankful for true friendships. I've got work to do in my life. I haven't always been a good friend. I've hurt a lot of people that I love. Message I got last night.

Got a message last night.

A true friend wants to show people the Lord and wants people to know the Lord.

...As much as I love this story. But even after all of that, that's not my favorite part!

Look with me in the book of Matthew. (Matthew 1:1, 5)

You think who you run around with doesn't matter?

Boaz. A man she met after she returned with Naomi to Bethlehem in Judah.

...You cannot lead your friend to the Lord, unless you are His friend.

Lesson 2: David and Jonathan (True friendship is rooted in selflessness)

(Video of man giving the shirt off his back.)

Joey Resto, who is the man you see in this video, saw a man shivering on the train with not even a shirt on. According to the news report Joey simply did what he thought he had to do. He didn't have to think about it or muster up enough courage. He simply just did it. He said at first he was just going to offer the man his shirt, but seeing how fragile the man was he knew he needed help putting it on. So he did, and he also decided to give him his hat to keep his head warm, and not seen on the video, but Joey also gives the homeless man his coat, and invites him over to his house for dinner and coffee, as well as to see how else Joey and his wife could help the man.

Talk about giving the shirt off your back to someone in need, Joey literally did that! A friendship was started that day on the train, and I don't know the rest of the story, but I hope it's a story that changed this man's life! Life is just better with friends, isn't it!? However, this isn't the first time a friendship has been started by someone giving the clothes off their back. In fact, maybe the most famous friendship of all time began in a very similar way. If you have your Bible flip over to 1 Samuel 18 with me.

Before we begin reading though, think for a minute with me about how friendships are born or started. Last week we talked about the friendship between Ruth and Naomi and learned how friendship should bring others to the Lord, and for the next couple weeks we're going to be looking at friendships, specifically what friendship should look like for a Christian. Maybe you sitting there thinking man I want to be a friend like that and I want a friend like that. Maybe you crave that kind of relationship. So you ask how?? How are they formed? How are they started?

Maybe many of you already know the answer to that. I know there a lot of you in here that have really good friends, and you know what that looks like, but I also know that things aren't always as they seem. From the outside it might look like you have plenty of friends, but a true friend is hard to find. By the way, being popular doesn't always mean you have friends. Just because someone has plenty of numbers in their phone and plenty of people to hang out with, doesn't mean that person has true friends. So, maybe there are a lot in here that have true friends, but there may be some, maybe even more than you'd think in this room that are in need of a good friend. Another thing about true friendships is: you can never have too many TRUE friends. So, how is a TRUE friendship born? What does that process look like? Think about that as we begin reading in 1 Samuel 18:1-5.

This is the beginning of the friendship of David and Jonathan. Remember David was the guy who defeated Goliath and Jonathan was the son of the King who's name was Saul! In this passage David has just got back from defeating the giant Philistine and had come before King Saul, and we'll pick up right there in verse 1.

1 Samuel 18:1-4

18 Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself. 2 Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father's house. 3 Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. 4 Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt.

1. Friendship is born out of love.

So, David is brought before Saul and his son Jonathan was there and after hearing what David had said to his father, look what happens. It says "Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him." So, I asked you how is a friendship started? How is a friendship born?

It's born out of love. Friendship is born out of love.

Jonathan and David had a friendship that was evident and a friendship that is still talked about to this day. A friendship so strong cannot be born of anything other than love. A true friend loves. Jesus said the greatest command is love. Paul says that the greatest thing of all is love, even better than faith and hope. Paul also says that everything we do should be out of love. You want to be a good friend? LOVE. You want to find someone that is a good friend? Find someone that LOVES.

Friendship is born out of love. Godly friendship is born out of love.

2. Friendship is being committed to one another.

So, we know that David and Jonathan's friendship was born out of love, but let's go back to our passage and look at what else their friendship consisted of. Look with me specifically at verse 2.

1 Samuel 18:3

3 Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself.

So, because Jonathan loved David he made a commitment to him.

"Friendship is being committed to each other."

This makes me think of being a little boy and making an oath or covenant with someone by spitting in your hand or cutting your hand shaking hands on it. I'm fairly certain that's not what they did, but what they did do was make a commitment to each other. Jonathan was committed to David. It's something that was in their friendship from the very beginning, and if we had time tonight we could look at several different stories of Jonathan proving his

commitment to David by sticking his neck out on the line for him to his father. A true godly friend is committed. Unfortunately, finding a friend that's committed and that will be there for you through thick and thin is a rare thing to find. If you have friends like that, you should consider yourself lucky, and I hope that you're willing to do the same.

As Christian friends we need to be committed. God takes this very seriously. He does not value someone who is wishy washy or easily deterred. If you're looking for a friend, find someone that is committed and who is reliable, but you too must be willing to offer the same level of commitment, because friendship requires commitment.

3. Friendship is rooted in selflessness.

David and Jonathan's friendship was born out of love and was founded out of a commitment, but there's one other aspect that permeated their friendship. Let's look back again at the text. Let's start in verse 4.

1 Samuel 18:1-4

18 Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself. 2 Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father's house. 3 Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. 4 Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt.

Jonathan gave David the shirt off his back, technically it was a robe, but also his armor, his sword, his bow, and his belt. From the very beginning of their friendship selflessness was there.

We learn from David and Jonathan that friendship is rooted in selflessness.

It's born of love, founded on commitment, and rooted in love.

So, many people today are looking for friends that can get them something, and what I mean by that is nobody wants to be friends with someone that's poor, or unpopular, or ordinary. I'm speaking generally, not specifically, right now. Everyone wants to be friends with the rich kid, right? The kid that has the nice vehicle and invites his friends over to his nice house and has awesome stuff, but what about the person that doesn't have all that much? Everyone wants to be friends with the popular and famous people, because they're exiting and you might think they have more to offer, but what about the one who nobody knows?

What I'm trying to say is that too many people aren't looking for friendships, they're looking for things. It's money, stuff, or status, but they're not in it for the relationship. They're in it for themselves. A true friend is not in it for his or herself. They're in it for the other person. I think we, and myself included, need to take a hard look at the people that we bring into or seek out in our life. Are we doing it for our own personal gain or out selflessness?

Jonathan was not in it for personal gain because what did David have to offer him? Jonathan was the son of a king! He had everything he could ever want! David at the time was just a lowly shepherd, but Jonathan didn't care.

We just read where Jonathan gave his robe, armor, bow, sword, and belt to David, and if we had time we could read about how Jonathan was willing to give up the throne, he was willing to sacrifice his relationship with his father who had grown angry to David, and ultimately Jonathan was even willing to risk his life to save David from the wrath of his father. Jonathan had nothing to gain materially or status wise from befriending David, but he had much to lose by it. However, Jonathan wasn't in it for himself. He was a selfless friend, and it permeated through every aspect of their friendship.

Look back with me one more time and notice Jonathan's selflessness in this passage.

1 Samuel 18:1-4

18 Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him **as himself**. 2 Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father's house. 3 Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him **as himself**. 4 Jonathan **stripped himself** of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt.

So, what did I learn today from the friendship of Jonathan and David.

1. I learned that a friend loves.
2. A friend is committed. (Through thick and thin)
3. A friend is selfless. (They're not in it for money, pride, or fame.)

Tonight I want you think about the kind of friend that you are, and think about the friends that you have. Do you truly love like you should love a friend? Are you committed, and are your friends committed as well? Are you in it for yourself or of them?

I hope and pray that as Christians and members of this church that we are all good friends, and that we are friends who love, are committed, and are selfless.

(Dismiss)

Lesson 3: Nathan and David (Friends tell the truth)

-Toy Story clip

Have you ever just wanted to scream out the truth to somebody?
YOU ARE A TOYYYYY!!!

Maybe a friend was throwing themselves a pity party, playing the victim, making excuses, and blaming everybody else. Maybe they started saying all of these things that just are not true.

And you just want to scream the out truth to them: "You wanna know the reason why you're going through all of these problems!!!? Because the problem is YOU!!!

You wanna know the reason why people are avoiding you? Because you're mean.

You know the reason why you're so bitter? Because you won't let things go! You won't forgive!

The reason you're not making good grades isn't because your teacher hates you! It's because YOU DON'T DO YOUR WORK!

The reason your boyfriend treats you like dirt because you allow him to treat you like dirt!!!

The reason you always date bad guys is because you only hang around bad guys!!!

You can't keep a job, not because the boss is out to get you! It's because you're lazy!!!

YOU ARE A TOYYYYYYY!!!

How do you handle the truth? Do you scream it at people? Do you say nothing? What do you do?

The book of Ecclesiastes says there is "a time to keep silent, and a time to speak."

But how do we know when to speak and when to be silent? And when we do speak, what do we say?

Tonight we'll be in 2 Samuel 12. And to give you the backstory, David is the most powerful man in the world, the king of God's people. God's king. The man after God's own heart. He's on top of the world. He has conquered all of his enemies. He's rich and he's got a wife and kids and a palace and this amazing life.

The man had everything...until he realized he didn't. One day David's on the roof of his palace getting some fresh air, and looks over and sees a naked woman bathing on the roof of her house.

Whoa. Who is she?

And so he sends one of his servants to find out. Oh that's Bathsheba. Uriah's wife.

Oh, ok, I can't have her. I can't go there. I didn't know she was married. End of story.

No. That's not how the story goes. David brings Bathsheba to the palace in secret, they have sex and David gets her pregnant while Uriah is away at war, fighting for his king by the way. And now we have this big political scandal.

And like all political scandals, we have to find a way to cover this up. Uriah's wife is pregnant and he ain't the baby daddy.

The short story. David does the unthinkable: he puts Uriah on the frontline in the heat of battle and tells the captain of the army to retreat, and Uriah is killed. And David drew it all up like it was a backyard football play.

Uriah is dead. David takes Bathsheba as his wife. Crisis averted! Everything is great! And King David still has his image and this great approval rating in the eyes of the people.

But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord. 2 Sam. 12:1

And the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, “There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. 2 The rich man had very many flocks and herds, 3 but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought.

By the way when we first meet David what is he doing? He’s a shepherd. Nathan tugging at David’s heartstrings a little bit.

And he [the poor man] brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him.

4 Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man’s lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.”

Two men. One had lots of sheep. The other had one little lamb. The rich man took the only thing that the poor man had: his lamb. Do you see the symbolism between David and Uriah? David this greedy, selfish king with everything at his disposal, and Uriah this man with something he loves dearly that king doesn’t have. David doesn’t understand the parable yet.

5 Then David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, “As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, 6 and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.”

7 Nathan said to David, “You are the man!”

Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. 8 And I gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. 9 Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.

We don’t read about Nathan and David having friendship bracelets or going over to each other’s houses for slumber parties. But you want to talk about friendship goals? A true friend tells you the truth.

I’ve heard this story all my life, but something hit me when I was studying for this lesson that hasn’t ever hit me before.

I want to ask you to put yourself in Nathan’s shoes for minute. Can you imagine how terrifying it would be to confront the most powerful man in the world about his deepest, darkest secret, one that he killed to protect by the way—a man so powerful he could snap his fingers and have you executed in seconds.

There’s a whole lot of things that this story teaches me. But here’s a big one: the truth, the truth is not convenient. The truth is not a convenient thing to have. In fact, most of the time it’s pretty inconvenient. The truth is not popular. A lot of people don’t like it. A lot of people don’t want to accept it.

But I’m telling you, the truth is not interested in being convenient.

Just ask Steve Harvey. Was the truth convenient for him when he read the card wrong? Was it popular for him to say “My mistake.”

I've got to say I have mad respect for Nathan in this story. He didn't back down from the truth. He loved the Lord, he loved His Truth, and he loved David enough to tell him what he needed to hear.

But now I want you to put yourself in David's shoes for a minute.

You've just been called out. You are the man. You have despised the Word of the Lord.

How do you react when someone confronts you and calls you out and holds you accountable for something wrong that you've done?

That's hard isn't it? I've told you guys the story about someone I looked up to named Travis when I was growing up...as much as it hurt, he was right.

I just said that I have mad respect for Nathan in this story, but I have just as much respect for David in this story for the way that he reacts.

In verse 13 he says very simply "I have sinned against the Lord."

What do you hear in that statement? (Seriously, what?)

No excuses. No blame. No playing the victim. No running. Owning it.

Tonight, I'm not calling out any one person or any one group. I'm calling out anybody that needs this. So if you need this, this for you. If you don't, that's awesome. But for what it's worth I need this.

I just want to present you with the truth in love and let you apply where you need it because you know better than I know.

I want to show you Ephesians 4:11-15. And please, please stay with me because the Word of God is so powerful.

11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

Ok, why did God give the apostles, prophets, evangelists, etc their abilities and those responsibilities? Verse 12. (1) To equip saints (us, Christians) for the work of ministry (ministry that's kingdom work. Working for the Lord). (2) Why did God give apostles, prophets, evangelists, etc. a job to do? To build up the body of Christ, (3) Why did he give them those responsibilities? To help us attain unity. (4) To help us mature.

Stay with me. This is important. We are not through, notice that verse 13 does not end in a period. Verse 14.

14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

If we are not united in ministry, in purpose, in maturity, in the knowledge of Christ, what will happen to us? What will we be like?

Verse 14. You are going to act like really childish. You'll be deceived. You'll get distracted. You'll be carried about, concerned about things that aren't right!

Look at the next word in verse 15. Rather. What does that mean? He's going to show us the way it should be. Rather than being deceived, rather than act childish, rather than getting carried away in things that are not right, what does God want us to do? Rather than get tangled up in those things.

15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Can I say this? Look back at verse 13. You see that word mature.

Look at verse 14 again. You see that word children. Now look at verse 15.

Can I say this truthfully and lovingly? If you are someone who gossips, who stirs things up, who loves drama, who loves to deceive or tell half truths, to run your mouth or things like that, GROW UP.

You're not helping. You're hurting. The end of verse 15, you're not building up the body of Christ. You're tearing it down.

Grow up. The church doesn't need it. It goes against our mission. Verse 14. It's childish. Verse 15. GROW UP.

How? How do we grow up? Look with me now. Verse 15. We speak the truth in love to one another.

It's not just speaking the truth. It's speaking the truth in love. We've got some options in the way that we treat each other.

The first option is the one that's laid out here in verses 15-16. We can speak the truth in love. And what happens when we do that. Well if that's our formula look what we get. Truth + love = growth (Eph. 4:15-16)

We need to hold up the truth, and we need to hold one another accountable IN LOVE. We MUST speak the truth in the right way. And watch this guys. This is so awesome. What happens when we do speak the truth in love?

15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Well that's option 1. But sometimes it doesn't exactly go that way.

Option #2 is we can tell someone that truth but we don't do it in a loving way. Truth - love = nothing

Paul said in 1 Cor. 13:2 it doesn't matter if I have a faith that can move mountains. If I don't have love, I'm nothing.

If you have the truth but you don't speak it in love, you know what it's good for? Nothing. You know what good is going to come from it? None.

Well they needed to hear it. Well maybe so, but if you said it without love, you didn't need to say it. And they didn't need to hear you say it. Truth without love is empty.

Love is a game-changer. You might speak the truth, but if you don't do it lovingly, you're going to come across like a jerk.

Option #3: love - truth = dishonest. In other words if I speak lovingly to someone, but do not tell them the truth, I have been dishonest with them.

Oh, you don't have anything to worry about! God loves you just the way you are! Don't change anything about the way you act or the choices you make. You're His child! And God just wants His children to be happy, so whatever you choose is okay with Him!

That's dishonest. God is not pleased with choices, or behaviors, or lifestyles that go against His, here's the word, truth.

If I keep my mouth shut when it comes to sharing God's truth, I've been dishonest.

Well, I don't need to tell them when they're doing something wrong, because that may come across as unloving.

No it's unloving to withhold truth. Jesus tells us "The truth shall set you free."

I've gone too long tonight. But I want to leave you with a few things.

1. A good friend is a loving, truth-teller. If you have a friend like Nathan, thank God. You are blessed.

2. When you confront someone...

It takes prayer.

It takes the right motive.

It takes humility.

It takes wisdom.

It takes guts.

It takes love.

3. When you are confronted with the truth, will you make changes or will you make excuses?

King David could've made excuses. Nathan, who do you think you are? I'm the king!!! Guards, off with his head! How dare you question me, the king! Bring me another prophet!

But David said a beautiful statement: I have sinned against the Lord.

4. And I wish we had more time to talk about this point: The Lord is quick to forgive and we should be, too.

The next part of the verse where David confesses his sin says, "And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die."

It blows my mind how quickly the Lord is willing to forgive David. This murderer. This adulterer. This guy who turned his back on God and tried to cover it all up.

... Yesterday I went to the funeral of a three year old little girl. Leigh White. Five months ago she was living in an orphanage in China.

Funerals have a way of putting things into perspective. Solomon said "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting." I think it's because you learn a lot about life during times of mourning at places like funerals.

And as I sat there and listened to the story about this little girl's life who smiled her way through every medical procedure and terrible circumstance, guys, my life, my problems, and I'm sorry, but even your problems, they became smaller and smaller.

Can you imagine going up to Jon and Andrea White and saying, "Listen to how terrible my day was." Listen to what so and so did to me. Can you believe she said that?

Guys, life's too short to live like that. If you need to apologize to somebody, do it. If you need to forgive somebody, do it. If you need to own something instead of blame everybody else for it, do it.

Lesson 4: Jesus: "Friend of Sinners"
Luke 5:29-32; Matthew 11:18-19; 1 Cor. 15:33

Friendship Goals:

1. Ruth and Naomi- A friendships bring friends to the Lord.
2. David and Jonathan- A true friendship is rooted selflessness.
3. David and Nathan- A friendship tells the truth, even when it's hard.

As we studied this idea of friendship goals, and what a true friend is, I hope that it has caused you to think, and reevaluate, and maybe change who you are as a friend. I hope that by studying these incredible friendships it's helped you to realize that we need to be better friends, and that Christians should be the bestest 'best friends!'

I also hope that maybe it's made you think about the kind of friends that you'd like to have, or maybe it's even made you rethink the friends that you already have.

If you're like me, which I hope that you're not, because that's not something I'd wish on anyone, but sometimes, especially when I was in high school, I didn't always hang out with the best crowd.

Now I'm not saying I was hanging out with murderers and thieves and criminals, but many of my so-called "friends," didn't not fall under the category of someone who always told me the hard truth like Nathan did, was selfless like Jonathan was, and they certainly weren't leading me to the Lord.

I'm sure we all have people like that in our lives, right? Maybe people you even call friends. Maybe, for some of you, all of your friends are people like that.

We all want to think that our friends are great and that our friends are the best friends to have, but for some reason we too often put blinders up when it comes to our friends and we don't see exactly who they are. We see what we want to see. We do this with our boyfriends and girlfriends, and even are friends.

We like our friends and maybe when someone like myself, or your parents, or someone else in the youth group insinuates or straight up tells you that you don't need to be involved with that person we get defensive, and maybe we even drop this line:

"Don't judge me and my friends, Jesus was a friend of sinners!"

You ever used that as an excuse or retort for who you spend your time with? Well Jesus spent time with sinners, why am I judged when I do it?

Maybe you've never thought that, but certainly most of us have wondered how do we follow Jesus' example of being a friend of sinners, but also following Paul's advice in 1 Cor. 15:33.

1 Cor. 15:33

33 Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."

Maybe you've never thought that to yourself, but maybe you have. Maybe you've used the title that is attributed to Jesus to make you feel better about the choices that you've made and are currently making regarding who you spend your time with.

Tonight we're going to learn more about what it means that Jesus is a friend of sinners. Now I know there's a popular song called "Jesus: friend of sinners," but tonight we're not going to look at some song, or popular thought, or cute theories about what people think of Jesus. We're going to study and look at the Bible.

We're going to see what the Bible has to say about the circumstances that led to Jesus being called a friend of sinners.

So if you have your Bible open up to Luke 5:29. Let's learn about how Jesus was given this title that is so popular today.

(BTW, can I just say how awesome you guys are for a second? I've got a lot of friends who are youth ministers and they talk all the time about how it's so hard to keep his class engaged, especially when they get into the text. I just want to say it really says a lot about you all that when I say let's turn to the text that you don't tune out. It says a ton about the way that you respect the scripture, and it's a blessing to me to know that I don't have to use a bunch of fluff and one bible verse to keep your attention. I just wanted to say that, because I really do appreciate it. I'm very blessed to work with Philip who teaches the truth and all of these cocoon leaders and your parents who are advocates of truth!)

Ok, let's get back to our topic!

Just to give a background for what's going on before this passage: Jesus has very recently began His ministry, he's started doing miracles like healing leprosy and the lame. So, people were beginning to flock to Him. In verse 27, Matthew is called by Jesus to "follow

Me," and Matthew throws a reception for Jesus at his home, that's where we take up in verse 29 let's read this together.

Luke 5:29

29 And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people who were reclining at the table with them.

I want to stop here and point out something here about our Jesus. You know that boy or girl who is a goody-two-shoes? That person who never does anything wrong and seems to be so pure? What kind of people do they usually hang out with? What kind of person do they usually attract? Well most of the time they don't attract a lot of people, because others might feel inferior to them. People, especially people with a lot of baggage, don't typically feel comfortable around people who are perfect. That's safe to say right?

That's pretty much the case with everyone, we attract the kind of people that we are most like. If you're artsy, then many of your friends are probably artsy. If you're a jock, then many of your friends are probably jocks. If you're in trouble all the time, typically you have friends that are also in trouble all the time. That's the standard, right?

Well that might be the case for everyone, but our Savior wasn't like everyone. Jesus was a man with no flaws, no baggage, and no sin. He was literally the perfect man. He must've been so intimidating, right? He must've been so pure and righteous that others felt uncomfortable in His presence...

Actually it was the complete opposite! Jesus was the most holy, pure, and righteous man that ever walked this Earth, but he was

someone who attracted a crowd, and an “undesirable” crowd at that!

The point i’m making is that Jesus, even in spite of his purity and holiness was attracting people who were considered impure and unholy!

Now someone might be inclined to think well Jesus attracted “bad people,” and i attract “bad people,” so that must be a good thing, right?

Umm not exactly. If you are someone that has friends that fall into the crowd of being people that your parents and minister warned you about, I want you to ask yourself this question:

“Are your friends drawn to you, because of your christianity, or because a lack of it?”

I think too many times the answer question is not the one it should be. Jesus was someone who was holy and others were drawn to Him because of it!

Let’s look at the next verse in our text.

Luke 5:30

30 The Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?”

The Pharisees and Scribes are grumbling and they question Jesus’ motive for hanging out with a crowd that they would never be associated with. Did you notice something between the way the

Pharisees referred to the crowd and how the Luke, the writer, referred to the crowd?

“Tax Collectors and other people vs Tax collectors and SINNERS”

This is so interesting to me! Luke never refers to this crowd as a crowd of sinners, but that’s how the Pharisees describe them! In fact, no one in the Bible ever calls Jesus a friend of sinners, except for the Pharisees!

Did you know that? Jesus never calls himself that, the Apostles never called Him that, and no other writer of the New or Old Testament ever used the phrase “friend of sinner,” except the Pharisees.

Look with me at Matthew 11:18-19...

Matthew 11:18-19

19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

Jesus is only ever called friend of sinner, by a group of people that were trying to bring Him down.

After learning that, and knowing the kind of people the Pharisees were, I can’t help but wonder if this group really was a group of sinners, or if they were just labeled that because they didn’t fit the part of what Pharisees wanted.

You know with all this talk about good friends vs bad friends and Christian vs Non-Christian is very easy to get caught up in labeling people unfairly.

The Pharisees looked down on these people Jesus was meeting with, because they were different than them. I hope that I never get so self-righteous that I start to believe that anyone who is not like me is unrighteous.

Just because someone is not like you, doesn't make them less important, less valuable, and it especially doesn't make them a sinner.

It didn't matter to Jesus if these people were rich, poor, healthy, sick, Roman, Jew, Black, White, Hispanic, or anything else. He loved them all. He invited them all!

Talk about friendship goals, Jesus didn't care about what you looked like or what you were into. He cared about the person inside that was made after the image of God.

"Friends care about the person inside, that was made after the image of God."

Let us not forget that!!

Let's see what the text shows us next!

Luke 5:31-32

31 And Jesus answered and said to them, "It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

I have come to call the sinners to righteousness. That's it, right there! The answer to our question of "How do we balance Jesus' example of befriending sinners and Paul's advice to stay away from bad company?"

The answer is in our purpose.

Jesus' purpose was to call sinners to righteousness.

What is your purpose? In your relationships and friendships, what is your purpose? I hope that you have a good time with your friends. I hope that they can help you out with things when you need it. I hope that they make you laugh, and I hope you enjoy being around them and their friendship.

But, Above all things, I hope that our purpose in every relationship, especially those who don't know the Lord, is to bring others to righteousness.

I'm going to make a bold statement, but if you spend time with people that are bad company, and your purpose is not to bring them to righteousness then that's not a relationship that you need to be involved in.

As, Christians we need to have a purpose, and our purpose is the same as our Savior: bring sinners to righteousness.

I hope that this series has been an encouragement to you, but also a good resource. My prayer is that I can be a friend like Jesus, because all of who Jesus is, is friendship goals.

I want to be more like Jesus, so that I can be a better friend to all of you guys, and I hope that you want to be like Him too!

Prayer.