

How to Make Friends

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[0 : 0 0] Hey friends, Anthony Parrott here, lead pastor of The Table Church. We are going to continue in our sermon series called Don't, parentheses don't, Be a Jerk. And we're talking about these twin concepts and skills and characteristics that Jesus put in a place of invitation and challenge.

And talking about how we as Jesus followers, folks who are filled with the Holy Spirit, who are called to make God's kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven, how we are meant to calibrate invitation and challenge to change the world, how we're meant to have relationships and make people feel welcome and warm and loved, and as well as making sure that we're growing and changing and that things are getting better and that requires challenge. So that's what we're talking about this week. Last week we introduced it. This week we are going to talk a little bit more about the invitational side of things. Next week we'll get to more of the challenging side of things. So to begin with, let's talk about friendship. Friendship, if you're a grown-up, you know that making friends is maybe one of the harder things you can do as a grown-up. It's not like kindergarten where you can just like walk up to somebody and say, can I be your friend? And they say yes. And then you go on from there. I'm preaching outside by the way, so there's going to be all sorts of background noise and some bees that are flying around. So this will be fun.

Let's talk about friendship. 50 to 75 percent of Americans report feelings of loneliness either all the time or oftentimes. So that's the large, large majority of us. We deal with loneliness regularly. Gen Z is the loneliest age group on record with the statistics that we have. And if we look at generations that say they have no close friends, 19 percent of Gen Z said they have no close friends, 27 percent of millennials, 33 percent of Gen Xers because nobody likes Gen Xers, and 16 percent of baby boomers say they have no close friends. If we look at this by race, you're twice as likely as a black person than a white person to say that you have no close friends. You can see the numbers there on the screen. There's lots of other stats I could have pulled. The number of people who say that they have no close confidence, some of the confidants, somebody they say that they can share like close intimate information with, that number has increased over time. Number of people who have said they have zero friends, that number has actually doubled over the past 10 years. So I think it's a quarter of our population say they have zero friends. So we're talking about invitation and challenge, and we're talking about friendship because if we're going to be world-changing kind of people, people filled with the Holy Spirit who are going to be acting out on the prayer on earth as it is in heaven, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, we have to know how to like build relationships.

We have to know how to like have friendships that are not solely based off of like changing the world, but also so that we are healthy, growing, capable people that can change the world together, in community, all together with our friends. So again, to review, invitation says, I'm glad you are here. I'm committed to you. I welcome you no matter what.

Challenge says, I want you to grow. I'm committed to your growth. I care too much about you to let things stay the same. And this can be true at friendship, personal level. This can be true at the organizational church level or the business or the world of, I want this nation to grow. I'm committed to this nation's growth. I care too much about it to let things stay the same. I care about this church and it growing and I care too much about it, things staying the same. I'm glad that I'm part of this church and I'm committed to it no matter what. And I will do what it takes to make people feel welcome no matter what. Invitation and challenge. We put this on a matrix that's up on your screen. If you are only invitation and no challenge, we call that the cozy quadrant where things are just cozy, fine, hunky-dory, and we never do anything hard. If you're high challenge and no invitation, that's the stressful quadrant. That's that people might grow there and feel challenged, but they don't feel loved or they don't feel welcome. If you have neither challenge nor invitation, that's apathetic and boredom and it's actually a way to cooperate with evil.

[4 : 22] And then if you are high invitation and high challenge, that's what we call discipleship. That's what Jesus brought is that he was this highly compelling person. People loved to be around him and Jesus changed lives. He changed society. He changed culture. Jesus sometimes was over here in the high challenge part of this upper right quadrant where he would call the Pharisees a brood of vipers, which was basically a first century way of calling them mother eaters. He would knock over tables in the temple. And sometimes he was on the higher invitation side of things where he would, you know, he would have a friendship with people. He would forgive people. He would heal them and give them, you know, heal their hunger. But he was always calibrating both at the same time, invitation and challenge. And today we're going to talk mostly about the invitational side of Jesus.

And we're going to look at that by looking at Jesus's friendship with a man named Peter. That was a bee. You get to see me in all my bee frightened glory. I'm not going to pretend like that didn't happen with a quick edit. So we're going to talk about Jesus's friendship with Peter.

And in order to start, we're going to take a look at Luke chapter 5. So if you have a Bible, I encourage you to turn it on, power it up, download the Bible app, find a Bible in your apartment, whatever. And the words are not going to be on the screen. You're going to find the book of Luke chapter 5. It's in the New Testament. It is the third book of the New Testament.

I would give you a page number, except all of our page numbers are different. And this is what it says. It says, So when they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break.

So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. Now when Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus's knees and said, Go away from me, Lord. I'm a sinful man. For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken. And so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. And then Jesus said to Simon, Don't be afraid. From now on, you will fish for people.

[7 : 31] So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything, and followed him. Now, if you've grown up in the church, or maybe this is just your first time ever hearing this story, your reaction might be, Man, Peter, that's a really big jump from meeting Jesus, getting some fish, and then leaving everything to follow Jesus. Like, you've probably never had a waiter bring you a really good meal and be like, I am leaving everything to follow you, waiter. Like, that's not how relationships typically work.

And so we read this in scripture like, Well, I guess that worked out for Simon, but that's not how I'm going to live my life. But here's something you ought to know. This is not the first time that Jesus and Peter had hung out. So what we're going to do now is I'm going to lead you through a few scriptures throughout the Gospels and show you the evolution of Jesus's and Peter's relationship, their friendship, this highly invitational Jesus, and how Peter builds this friendship with Jesus, and give us some of the traits of what friendship can look like and what we can learn. So this is not the first time that Jesus and Simon have met. If we go to the book of John, so it's the fourth gospel, the fourth book of the New Testament. Go to the book of John chapter 1, verses 35 to 42.

We hear, this is where Jesus and Peter are introduced. So this is verse 35. It says, The next day, John, this is John the Baptist, Jesus's cousin. And John the Baptist has had this ministry. He's a traveling rabbi preacher. And he has this ministry, and he turns to two of his disciples. John the Baptist had disciples too. And he sees Jesus, and he says, Look, the Lamb of God.

So when the two disciples heard John the Baptist say this, they actually left John, sorry John, your old news, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turns around, sees them following him, and asks, What do you want? And they said, Rabbi, teacher, where are you staying? Jesus says, Come and you will see. So they went, and they saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. So John the Baptist has disciples, tells his disciples, there's Jesus, the Lamb of God, the disciples, leave John the Baptist, follow Jesus, and basically just have a day of hanging out with Jesus. We're not told what they do. I assume some Nintendo is involved.

Verse 40 continues, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who had heard John, what John had said, and followed Jesus. So the first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, We found the Messiah, that is the Christ. And he brings his brother Simon to Jesus.

[10:09] Jesus looks at him and says, You are Simon, son of John. From now on, you will be called Cephas, which is translated Peter, or Peter means rocker, like Rocky. I think Jesus gives Simon a nickname, Rocky, right here. So we have the story of Jesus meeting some of John's disciples. One of them's Andrew. Andrew gets his brother Simon. Simon and Jesus meet. Jesus and Simon are heading it off.

Jesus is like, I'm going to give you a nickname. So I think there's a few things about friendship we can learn here. Number one, friendship requires like spending time together. It's really hard to be friends if you don't make yourself available, make your time available to other people. Now in college, high school, elementary school, this is easy because we're forced into these buildings together. We're forced into dorms, hallways, classrooms. And so we're forced to spend time together. And so of course, it's easy to make friends. We need to have nothing but time to spend together. When we become adults and we get jobs, this becomes a little bit harder. Because now we don't just have friendships of convenience, we have to have friendships of intentionality.

I'm going to schedule time to spend with other people. And that's what Jesus does here. He makes himself available to John's disciples, to Andrew's brother Simon, and they hang out for the day. Number two, we have to be open to new relationships. Andrew was spending time with John and now wants to spend time with Jesus. He wants to be open to what a new friendship might offer him.

Andrew also doesn't just keep Jesus to himself. He goes and he grabs his brother Simon and says, you have to hang out with this guy too. So Simon, Andrew, they hang out together with Jesus and they make a new friendship. Number three, the thing I see here is that we have to allow our friends to be able to change us for the better. Spending time with friends is a formational thing. It shapes our souls and our characteristics and our personalities and we have to let that happen for the better. Because friends will sometimes point out like, hey, did you know it's really annoying when you do this? Hey, I really love the fact when you do this. Those kinds of conversations happen in friendships. And we have to let that happen so our friends can shape us for the better so that we can shape others for the better.

Friendship should be about growing together. And I see this in Jesus and Simon's interaction of Jesus saying like, you've been called Simon, the son of Jonah for a long, long, long time.

[13 : 02] What if I start calling you Rocky? And Peter was like, okay, I'll go with that. Let's keep going. Now, we're going to go back to the book of Luke chapter four. Now, this is actually a passage that we read last week. So we won't go over it fully again. But in Luke chapter four, Jesus has been a traveling rabbi for a while and he goes back to his hometown of Nazareth. And if you remember the story from last week, in Nazareth, Jesus proclaims the gospel, proclaims the good news, says it's a good news for everybody, the Jew and the Gentile, the insider and the outsider. And his hometown reaction is they try to throw him off a cliff. They try to get rid of him. They try to kill him. Now think about who's in this crowd. These are the people that Jesus grew up with. These are friends and family, cousins, siblings who turn drastically on Jesus. They turn on him. They try to kill him.

So think about the pain that Jesus has just been through being rejected by his hometown. By kind of reading between the lines and looking at some of the different stories, we get the impression in the gospels that Jesus's brothers didn't like him very much, which, I mean, who would enjoy growing up with the literal son of God? That'd be a hard sibling to have. We get the impression his brothers don't like him very much. There's one story where the brothers try and are arresting Jesus or try to take Jesus back home because they think that he's gone insane. So we get this impression that like the family relationship that Jesus has is not great. I know some of you can relate to that, that you've had strained family relationships. And so what do you do? You look for new types of family. Sociologists call this a fictive kinship where we look outside of our biological bonds of family and we look towards friends. I mean, look, think about some of your favorite TV shows.

Lots of them have to do with these fictive kinship groups about groups of friends that create familial bonds together everywhere from new girl to how I met your mother to the, you know, the original friends and all the way back to, you know, cheers and everything like that. This, these relationships mean something. And so Jesus, being rejected by his hometown, leaves Nazareth and heads to, let's go to Luke 4 31, Capernaum. Then Jesus went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath he taught the people. They were amazed at his teaching because his words had authority. So Jesus leaves his hometown, goes to Capernaum, and has a much better response. Why does Jesus go to Capernaum, you might ask? Well, we find out in verse 38. Jesus leaves the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Capernaum is the hometown of Simon and Andrew. So Jesus, he gets rejected out of Nazareth. He doesn't just go wandering, looking for a new place to live. He goes to a place where he has some friends, where he has some connection, and that's Capernaum. Now, let's keep reading. It says, he went to the home of Simon, verse 38, and Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her.

So Jesus bent over, rebuked the fever, and it left her. And she got up at once and began to wait on them. So there's a couple other friendship keys I see here. Number one, we have to be willing to help our friends.

Friendship is not just a take, take, take relationship. We have to be willing to offer help. Help them move. Help get groceries. Help them, you know, from with whatever they need to help with.

[16:57] Friendship should be about giving in some way. And number five, friendship is also about being willing to receive help. If you have a friend who is wanting to help you in some way, I think it's a friendly thing to do to want to receive that help, to say, yes, I could really, really need that. I am naturally a person who doesn't accept help very well, like, because of my upbringing, being through the foster system, growing up with a mentally unstable mom. Like, I'm a very independent person.

I don't like to receive help. And that can actually hinder relationship, hinder friendship, because people feel like, like, well, I have nothing to offer this person. So we have to be willing to help and also have to be willing to receive help. Now let's pause here for just a second.

Jesus goes to Capernaum and he goes to his friend's house, this acquaintance at least, Simon, somebody that he spent at least a day with, Simon and Andrew. And they welcome him into their Greek word, oikos. Their oikos. Now, oikos was the typical way that a family would organize itself in a Jewish and Greco-Roman world. The oikos existed for two reasons, protection and provision. The way the oikos was constructed is that you would have four walls and you would have a courtyard in the middle and around the courtyard, you have a variety of rooms for people, animals, livestock, all of that. If you were wealthy, you would have a second level and then a deck or a courtyard on top where you could look out. And the reason they were built like this was for, for protection reasons. You could see enemy forces, outside forces coming in and you had these four walls and a courtyard in the middle. So you had ways of protecting yourself. And this, oikos was also about provision. The family unit existed to provide for each other. And so if Simon, Peter, was a fisherman, that meant his dad was a fisherman and his uncle was a fisherman and his grandfather was a fisherman. The oikos also wasn't just like a nuclear family, mom, dad, couple, kids. Usually you would add on to the oikos with, listen, he goes to, Jesus goes to Simon's house and who's there? Simon's mother-in-law. And this isn't like a, everyone loves Raymond situation where the mother-in-law is just there all the time. No, she probably had like a house or room attached to it. Or more likely when Simon Peter married his wife, he moved into his wife's home and they built a place for him and his wife. And the oikos would expand that way. Now listen to what Jesus does.

Oh, first I have a couple pictures. Here is actually a picture in modern day Capernaum. And this is what is believed to be Simon and Andrew's home. So this is the actual like archaeological dig. There's some good archaeological reasons why we think it's Simon and Andrew's home. It's next to a synagogue, which lines up with the story that we just read. There's some artifacts that show that this place was a place of Christian baptism. Eventually a church would meet here. Here's an artist's rendition of what this might look like if everything were built up. You can see the multiple levels. You can see that there's walls and a courtyard and everything is on purpose, very difficult to get to so you could protect against any sort of invading army or force. So the oikos exists for protection and provision.

Listen to what Jesus does. Verse 40. At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sicknesses and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. Moreover, demons came out of many people shouting, you're the son of God, but he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak because they knew he was the Messiah.

[20 : 51] So Jesus takes the oikos, the thing that's meant to be about protection and provision of the family unit, and Jesus turns it inside out. He takes the oikos and he makes it about helping the people outside of the oikos. He invites the hungry and the sick and the demon-possessed into Simon and Andrew's oikos so that he can heal them and feed them and help them. We'll talk about this later in a later sermon series, but this is very and very important. That whereas naturally we want our homes to be places of protection and provision for ourselves, Jesus says, what if your home was the base of ministry for the neighborhood? Okay, now let's keep going. Thing number six about friendship is that friendships ought to exist for the common good. You know, the difference between a clique and a group of friends that you want to be a part of is a clique exists for their own purposes. A clique exists and doesn't want anybody else to join, doesn't want to help anybody else. But a group of friends that you look at and you say, man, I want to be a part of that. Can I join? They exist for the common good.

They make everybody feel good around them because of the joy that they bring. Friendship and friend groups ought to exist for the common good. Let's go to verse 42. At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place. Now people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving. But he said, I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom and other towns also.

That's why I was sent. So Jesus, he goes to Simon and Andrew's house and then he goes off to pray for a while. I think the seventh thing to know about friendship is that we need to offer space to our friends. I think we've all had a friend who we might call clingy or needy or we just want them to give us space. We need to be self-aware enough to say, oh yeah, I shouldn't just spend all of my time with one or two people. I need to give them space, offer them the ability to be by themselves and offer myself the ability to be by myself. Now, during the pandemic, we're all in a time where we probably spent way too much time by ourselves. So maybe this isn't a particularly great point to bring up right now. But for the future, make sure that you're the kind of person who knows when and how to offer space to your friends. Okay, so that's all the background. John the Baptist introduces Andrew to Jesus.

Andrew introduces his brother Simon to Jesus. Jesus gets rejected from his hometown. He goes to Capernaum and finds his acquaintances, Simon and Andrew, and hangs out with them. Jesus then goes back as an itinerant minister and then he comes back to the Sea of Galilee. And that takes us back to our original passage, Luke chapter 5. Jesus is doing ministry. A large crowd is gathered and Jesus says, hey Simon, we've hung out before. Can I borrow your boat? Can we put out from the shore a little bit so I can talk to this massive group of people? Simon says, sure. They then go out further.

Miraculously, through Jesus, Simon and his fishermen friends and partners are able to make this miraculous catch a fish. And Simon's like, whoa, I am hanging out with an authority and a power and a person who I don't deserve to be around. And Jesus says, don't be afraid. You're going to be a fisher of people. And Simon leaves everything to follow Jesus. So this is Jesus at his best. Jesus is calibrating invitation, friendship. He's made friends with Simon and Andrew. He's healed Simon's mother-in-law. He's hung out in their oikos, their home. They've spent time together. They spent the day together. Jesus offers Simon space. He comes back into Simon's life and wants to be friends with him. He also offers Simon challenge in the form of vocation. Simon, I know you've been a fisherman all your life. You've been called Simon, son of Jonah, who his father and his father before him were fishermen too. I want you to fish for people. And Peter's response is to leave everything and to follow Jesus. This is the power of friendship. Not that we want, you know, people to follow us and say, I don't deserve to be around you. That's not the point. We're not Jesus. But friendship, we ought to be the kinds of people that other people want to be around. We ought to be the kinds of people that other people say, I want some of what he's having. We ought to be the kinds of people who, when people are around us, they say, can we hang out some more? And that requires, at least for some of us, me included, like intentionality and work. Like we don't become good friends accidentally. We don't become the kinds of people that people want to hang out with just by doing nothing about it.

[25 : 52] Friendship requires work. In two weeks, we'll talk about how invitation and challenge all come together. Next week, Pastor Angela is going to talk about challenge and making the right kind of trouble. But I want to offer you an invitation and a challenge for today. Invitation. Express gratitude to your friends. Send a card, send a meal, offer to FaceTime out of the blue. Just recognize the friends that are in your life, the people who have invested in you, wanted to pour into you. Just say thanks.

I appreciate it. Can we hang out some more? And this is my challenge. Of the seven things that we talked about, which one or two or seven, if you're like me, which one of these do you need to spend some time thinking about how you're going to grow in? Is it number one, spending time together, that you just need to put friendship in your calendar so you make time for it? Number two, are you open to new relationships or are you just kind of settled with the friends that you have and have always had and you're not willing to make any more? Number three, are you allowing yourself to be seen, to be changed for the better? Jesus sees Simon and says, I'm going to call you Rocky. Is that okay? And Simon says, okay.

Are you willing to be seen and to be changed for the better by your friends? Number four, are you willing to help your friends, to help them when they're in a tight spot, to help them when they need help moving and, you know, moving boxes around, get, you know, getting gas for their car, whatever?

And are you willing to receive help when you are in a tough spot? Are you able to say, I will let you help me? Do your friendship exist for the common good? Do other people look at your friendships and say, can I be a part of that? Or do they look at your friendships and say like, oh, that's a click. I have no interest in joining. And then number seven, are you good at offering space of not being clingy and needy and overly attached? Are you able to say, you're a person, I'm a person, we can be friends together and we can also exist apart.