

Series: Friends Indeed

Week 1: Friendships Matter

John 15:11-17

July 14, 2002 • Sunday 9:15 AM • Dr. David McKinley

[Music by PBC High School Choir]

[Dr. McKinley intro]

When you study what the Scripture says about the subject of worship, you find that indeed worship can be seen in posture. The idea of laying down in the presence of God, falling on your face and realizing that we are unworthy to receive His grace, to experience His glory of life and certainly it can be seen in posture. Worship is expressed in praise in the Scripture. We have an entire song book, a hundred and fifty Psalms in the middle of the Bible that overflow with the praise of the heart to God and certainly it can be seen in moments of praise. But the true essence of real worship is not outward posture or even the smile and the participation and praise, it's really that which begins deep within the heart. It's something that is expressed in praise, expressed in posture, expressed in a time like this season of giving that we're about to share together. But, it all begins one by one in your heart and in my heart. The Scripture says in 2nd Corinthians chapter 8, Paul talking about the church in Macedon that this is what they did. He said they first gave themselves to the Lord and then to us by the will of God. It was a giving church, but the giving of the church began with that individual commitment of each part of that church to give of themselves to the Lord and that's really what we're about here in the ministry of Prestonwood. We come to this time. This isn't a time where we support the ministry of Prestonwood. Prestonwood doesn't need your support. But let me tell you this God has given you and given me the opportunity to invest in His work and in His kingdom through the life and the ministry of Prestonwood Baptist Church and that is an incredible blessing and privilege. It's seen this morning in the faces of a group of young people who are praising the Lord Jesus Christ. We're seeing a difference in their lives. It's seen in the expansion of these facilities as we today are embarking upon the day's of, of taking on and taking over new property and new space. This building here to my left and your right that we're about to enter into here later this month, this building is going to open the door for Prestonwood Christian School to advance it's daily, weekday ministry through our church and listen to this we are going to add eighty, eight-zero, eighty new preschool and children's departments this fall on Saturday evening and on Sunday morning. That is incredible. Now, ladies and gentlemen that's in addition to hundreds of boys and girls that we already have coming and being here every week. But why are we doing this? Because we're seeing the future and we're investing to make a difference in the lives of people.

You can be a part of that through giving. But you can also be a part of that first by giving of yourself. In fact as we expand these departments with boys and girls there's great opportunity for new adults to come and to invest their lives with children and we need you to do that and I want to urge you to do that. Following this service today not only will you have time to give and to share in the offering but to give of yourself by going into the atrium and there's a place where you can meet with our preschool and children's leadership and say, "Hey, I'm willing to be one who will make a difference in the year to come." Don't you think, don't you think in a day when churches have been filled with scandals about what's happened with children that we need to step up to the plate and to put the best of all that we have on the front line to make a difference with boys and girls in the days to come? Don't you think we ought to do that? Don't you think we ought [applause] to have the finest, the best [pause for applause] that we can have working with our children? We do have criteria. We do background checks. We do all of these things because we are committed to making a difference. Just this week I read a report from George Barna that said only five percent; five percent, actually less than five percent of the churches in America even have a student ministry with a hundred young people or more in it. What are we doing for the next generation? Well, I can tell you we better be doing what God has called us to do and we have envisioned and embraced that together here at Prestonwood. Now, this isn't a sermon it's coming later but this is just a little extra [pause for congregation laughter] because I wanted to share with you this morning the joy of what we get to be a part of giving first of ourselves and then through this church, through this ministry to one another and to our community for the glory of Jesus Christ.

[Dr. McKinley, Offertory Prayer]

Offertory Solo: Joseph "Joe" McKinley

[Dr. McKinley, message "Friendships Matter"]

Well, I went to Los Angeles this week. Judging from a few alterations to my appearance this morning some of you may think that's a confession. [pause for congregation laughter] But actually Connie and I wanted to use up some frequent flyer miles and take advantage of the opportunity just to get close to our son Joseph and to this choir and I can not tell you how blessed we have been to be connected to these students this week and to see and to experience first hand God using them in a variety of churches and some of the most unbelievable settings possible. I watched them as they stood at the center court at Universal Studios City Walk and simply gathered a crowd around to come and to see these bright smiling faces as they would sing and share a rather energetic presentation and then how that they would break up and break out and go and speak to adults and students and children and share their faith. They stood at the corner of Hollywood and Highland right there at the Kodak Theater where the Academy Awards take place every year across the street from the Gromans, a, Chinese Theater and they stood in an open arena and testified of Christ and were used there and then working in inner city churches and it's been an incredible thing to see and to behold and I am greatly blessed and a, I

just got a tell you that kid who just sang, he's not much of a kid anymore, but I not only love him because I'm his Dad, I just like him a lot, he's just a, he's a great young man and I thank God for that and you can't know what a joy this is for me, a, to have him sing and then to have this privilege to speak, to preach, to share in the absence of our pastor. But, I'm grateful to do it and grateful you're here and I hope that you have a Bible and if you do that you take it and open it to John chapter 15 because that's where we're going to focus our attention this morning in the 15th chapter of the book of John.

You know if I had the ability this morning to simply go up and down the aisle and to pass out 3 by 5 cards like the one that I have in my hand and I were simply to ask you to take this card and to put on the top of this card 5 things that I believe to be the most essential for a full and meaningful life I wonder what we would find on your card? If you just had to put 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and to list the 5 things that you think are the most essential things to having a full and a meaningful life obviously we're at different ages and stages of life, we come from diverse backgrounds, we have a variety of different tastes and interests in life. But, I'm convinced that for all of the differences that are present and expressed in this building this morning that there are some things that we would find to be common, to be similar, that would end up on our card and I'm convinced that for almost everyone in this building that one of the top 5 things that you would identify as being needed for a full and a meaningful life, that one of those things would be friends, friends, friendships because everyone of us knows that the well being of life is ultimately connected to the relationships of life whether they are healthy or unhealthy, whether they build us up or tear us down because every one of us knows that we were made for relationship and that one of the most craved and one of the most desired of all relationships is to be able to look at someone else and say, "You are my friend." Now, I would have to immediately admit that most of us would have different definitions of what it means to be a friend. I brought a few along with me this morning in hopes that maybe they would help us as we consider this subject and I thought I would just take a moment and share them with you.

Someone has said that, *"A friend is someone who will keep your secrets and never divulge them even if tempted by chocolate."* [pause for congregation laughter]

Someone else has said, *"A friend is someone who knows you don't know what you're talking about but will let you reach that conclusion independently."* [pause for congregation laughter] Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

Somebody has said, *"A friend is someone who will go on the same diet with you and off it with you also."* [pause for congregation laughter]

Then I love this. It's been said that a friend is someone to whom you may pour out all the contents of your heart, chaff and grain together, knowing that the gentlest of hands will take it and sift it, keep what is worth keeping and with the breath of kindness blow the rest away. I don't know

about you but I want to have friends like that in my life and I want to be a friend like that to others. I want to be a friend to those who know me and associate with me and I love the joy of deep and growing friendship that I share in my life with those who God has given to me.

And so this morning I want to talk to you and I want to begin today over these next few weeks to talk to you about what it means to be a friend and I'm gonna call this series, *Friends Indeed*. *Friends Indeed*, because there's a little proverb, a little human proverb, not in the Scripture, but a human proverb that I think captures the essence of what I want to try to say to you and it simply says this:

A friend in need is a friend... would you complete it? [congregation response] ...indeed! Let's say that together. [congregation response] A friend in need is a friend indeed! And because my life is filled with many needs I need some friends who will indeed be friends to stand by me in every hour of need. The Bible does tell us that there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. The Bible tells us that a friend loves at all times and so it might be of interest to you today for you and me to investigate the core passage of Scripture in the New Testament where Jesus talks about the subject of friendship and today I want us to look at this passage and to take away 3 very simple but very vital truths that I think will make a difference in life for you and me if we are going to be friends indeed.

Let's begin reading in John chapter 15 and verse 11, John chapter 15 and verse 11. Jesus Christ is speaking and this is what He says, *"These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may remain in you; and that your joy may be full."* Jesus says, what I'm about to tell you I'm telling you because I want you to live a joy filled life. I want your life to be meaningful. I want you to be fulfilled. In fact that word, *"...that your joy may be full."* The last word in verse 11 is literally the word *"...complete."* In fact if you have an NIV translation it says, *"...that your joy may be complete."* Just as they were singing the song, *"...being complete in Christ"* it is Christ who makes us complete. [Turned Tape] And so we continue reading in verse 12. *"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his..."* What? [congregation response] *"...friends. You are my friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you..."* What? [congregation response] *"friends, for all things that I've heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, and whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give to you. These things I command you that you love one another."*

Over and over in this passage Jesus talks about friends and friendship and in that discussion he reveals some things that are things that I think we need to take away today.

The first is a very simple observation but a very important observation

and it is simply this; Jesus invites you into a relationship of friendship with Himself. Jesus invites you and invites me to come into a relationship of friendship with Himself and with God the Father. Christ came in order that the most important relationship of life, the creator relationship might be made right and because of the fact that the Bible teaches that every one of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, every one of us have turned from God to our own ways and have lived out a rebellious sinful lifestyle. Though we may not all be equal in the reflection of that it is true in every heart that we are born self-driven, self-centered, self-focused. Jesus Christ came from heaven to earth in order that you and I might be able to be made right with God and that we might be able to enter into a new relationship with God the heavenly Father through Christ the holy Son and the way that we enter that relationship is through the power of His cross. Look at what the Bible says here in John chapter 15 and verse 13. *"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."* Jesus said, hey, I've come and I've come to meet the greatest need that you have, the need that every man, every woman, every boy and girl needs is a need for a Savior and Jesus came to be the Savior, to lay down His life to pay the penalty for our sin by dying on the cross and Jesus Christ extends the hand of God to every one of us and says, I want to be your friend. I want you to know Me. I want to be close to you. I want to meet the need of your life and Jesus is the hand of God extended to the sinner to say, come take My hand, trust Me, believe Me in order that we might have a new relationship and it is the relationship of friendship and that relationship sir, that relationship maam when it happens in your life is a relationship that changes everything about you. Jesus talks about having joy, about having love, about fulfilling a purpose here in life and those are the things that every one of us need. We need joy. We need love. We need purpose and it is through a relationship with God, through His Son Jesus Christ that we begin to know and experience that loving and fulfilling purpose. You see tragically in the world of religion so much of the focus is on performance. So much of what the religions of the world teach are performance driven objectives, that if you do this, if you do that, that you will merit the love of God, that you will gain the favor of God. But, you see the Bible knows nothing of that and Christianity knows nothing of a performance driven religion. What Christianity always presents is a clear simple truth, God saw the need, the condition of my life without Him and He stepped out of heaven, stepped in to earth, extended Himself by putting His hands, nailing them to the cross, shedding His blood and offering us a gift, a gift of life, a gift of forgiveness and ultimately a relationship of friendship. I ask you this morning have you ever put you hand in His hand? Have you ever taken the hand of Jesus and said, "Jesus I trust You to be my Lord and my Savior?" Have you entered that dynamic changing relationship whereby Christ has made you the friend of God and that now you like Abraham, who we've been studying with our pastor in the book of Genesis; you like Abraham are a man or a woman whose life goal and whose life commitment is to be a friend of God? What a wonderful friend we have in Jesus. The songwriter wrote it so well when he wrote those words.

"What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear! What a

privilege to carry Everything to God in prayer! O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry Everything to God in prayer!"

Jesus is a friend and Jesus invites you and invites me to enter into a relationship of friendship with Himself. But, not only does the Bible teach us that Jesus invites us to enter into a relationship of friendship, but the Bible goes on to say, Jesus Himself teaching here says, in verse 12, "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." Jesus said, now I love you. I've loved you enough to give My life for you in order that your life might be changed. But He now says, now I am interested in your relationship with others.

So the second major truth that we see this morning is that Jesus is interested in my relationship and in your relationship with others in our lives. He's interested in our relationships. He wants to be involved in our relationships and while indeed the Bible is a book that tells us that we can be right in our relationship with God it is also the book that gives us the greatest practical instruction about how we can be right in our relationships with one another. This is a book of relationships and from cover to cover the Bible gives us specific instructions as to how we can succeed and how we can be fulfilled in the relationships of life. If you were to take the New Testament alone and do a simple study of how many times you find the little phrase, "one another" you would be interested to find that there are 26 specific commandments in the New Testament that are "one another" commandments, reciprocal commandments telling us how to share life as members of the body of Christ. It tells us, we're to love one another, we're to pray for one another, we're to bear one another's burdens, we are to forbear one another, we are to forgive one another, we are to encourage and lift up one another and on and on the Scripture goes to tell us about how we are to get along together. In fact there's even a passage of Scripture, Romans chapter 16 and verse 16 that says this, "Greet one another with a holy kiss." Now don't get too dramatic about playing that out right in the middle of this message. [pause for slight congregation laughter] But I've shared that with you before because even the Bible writes a commandment telling us to greet one another. You know that in the eastern culture that it is common thing to greet one another with a kiss on each side of the face. Today we do it in the form of a handshake and when we tell you to shake hands with one another that is a biblical command to greet one another, show hospitality to one another. Why? Because God tells us how to get along with one another. He is interested in our relationships beginning with loving one another. The Bible is filled with information about relationships in our family and how we're to get along with the members of our family. The Bible tells the husband he's to love his wife as Christ loved the church and he's to live his life sacrificially for his wife. The Bible tells a wife she's to revere and to honor her husband and to build him up and to support him in his role in leadership in the family. The Bible tells children that they are to obey and to honor their parents. But the Bible also says to the parent don't provoke your children, don't misuse and abuse your children and the Bible gives us all sorts of insight as to how our relationships

are to function and how our relationships are to work. So many times when it comes to human interpersonal relationships people think that the Bible is just a, a standard that no one can live up to and that ultimately the Bible often times is the perimeter that keeps us from having fun in life. But, I found it fascinating this week on two occasions to pick up U.S.A. Today Newspaper, the Life section and to read the cover story article on Monday of last week and this is what it says, "*Cohabiting can make marriage an iffy proposition.*" [pause for slight congregation laughter] And it goes on to identify a massive amount of research presented in a family symposium this week, not among Bible believing Christians but simply among sociologists and social scientists and this is the conclusion quote, "*If you want someone to marry choose someone who won't live with you.*" Now do you know why they're saying that? Because after nearly 2 decades of saying we need to try it out, check it out and see if it works out that they realize it doesn't work and the reality is it doesn't work because it is a violation of the core issue of what makes a lasting fulfilling relationship. Marriage is based on commitment. That's what God's Word teaches and as long as we've tried to violate what God's Word teaches we've only ended up with greater injury, greater sense of loss of security. Why? Because God tells us how to have lasting, fulfilling, securing relationships. Two days later I picked up the same newspaper, opened it to the Life section again and I found another headline in that same section and it said this, "*Unhappily wed? Put off getting that divorce.*" Then it says, "*Study finds that waiting and working it out can pay off.*" What it goes on to say that far too many people have believed that a divorce was the answer to their lack of security, their lack of well being, their lack of happiness and many people have gotten divorces only 5 to 10 years later to end up more insecure, more depressed, less fulfilled because of the fact that they thought that the problem was their mate when many times it was a problem with resolving conflicts in life. You know the Bible tells us clearly, "*God hates divorce.*" We can't hide that, that's what the Bible says. But please let me be sure that though you hear that the Bible teaches that God hates divorce, that you understand that the Bible never says God hates divorcees. God knows there are many people who have been injured, who have been rejected, who have been destroyed because of someone whom they trusted who has been unfaithful in love and who has been unkind and abusing in a relationship and God loves divorcees. But why is it that God hates divorce? Because broken homes create broken humans who create more broken homes and it's a destructive thing in society and that's the reason that God says, I want to protect you, I want marriage to be committed, I want marriage to be secure, I want relationships to be founded upon love. I want relationships to last and to endure because all of these are a part of God's work in our relationships. You see Jesus says, I want to be involved in your relationships with other people and that's exactly what the Bible is teaching us here in John chapter 15. But there's a third thing that I want you to see this morning and that is not only that Jesus invites us into a relationship of friendship with Himself and secondly that Jesus is interested in your relationships with others.

But please get this third thing because it is so evident in this text.

Jesus intends your friendship with Him to become a bridge to introduce Him to your friends.

Jesus wants your friendship with Him to become a bridge whereby you introduce Him to your friends. Look at John 15 once again. Jesus says here in verse 14, *"You're My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant doesn't know what his master is doing; but I've called you friend, for all things I've heard from My Father I've made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit,"* Jesus says, I have a purpose for you and My purpose for you is that when you come to know Me and when I change your life that those who you know and those whom you come in contact with are ultimately influenced by you and through you there's an opportunity for them to get to know me. This is a vital part of understanding what the Bible teaches about friendship and God's perspective on friendship in my life and in your life. Because God wants your life and my life to be that bridge that influences other lives for Him. You see ladies and gentlemen if Satan, the enemy, cannot keep you from coming to Jesus Christ then his primary aim and objective is to try to keep you from becoming the kind of Christian that will lead other people to Christ because his main goal is to try to keep people separated and under his dominion of darkness. But, God has chosen you and God has appointed you, not just to the evangelists like Billy Graham, not just the pastor, not just a gifted few but God has called and appointed everyone of us that we would become bridges of reaching our friends for Christ and the heartbeat of this message is simply to say to you this morning friendships matter, they matter to you and they matter to God. Because God uses the friendships of my life and of your life to lead others to Him.

Now let me just wrap up these thoughts this morning by looking and discussing how you and I can be bridge builders to people who need to know Christ around us. I think every person in this room who's listened to very many sermons knows that we are called to be witnesses of Christ. But I want you to see that witnessing is being a friend in need and being a friend indeed and this morning I want to just suggest to you that there are 3 basic ways that you can use your life and your friendships to be a place where you can make a difference for Christ, where you can be a bridge builder into the life of others.

The first is through your story, your story. Every one of us in this room have a story. We may not have a printed biography but we do have a life story that reflects what our life has been, what our life is becoming, what our life was like without Christ and what our life is going to be and is becoming in Christ. In the 26th chapter of the book of Acts there's an incredible illustration of Paul the apostle standing before Agrippa and in the opening verses he talks about what his life was like without Christ, then he talks about meeting Christ and then he talks about what his life has been like since he's come to know Christ. It's kind of a little formula: BC – The cross – AC – After Christ. And if you want to develop your story simply think of what Christ has done in your life and every day as you come in contact with people just talk about changes that have been made in your life through Jesus Christ. It is your story. Far to many times we think that witnessing is learning a series of formulas and having

doctrinal positions and convincing people how committed we are. What we need to do is just tell people how real Christ is to us and share the story. But not only is there your story there's something else that you need to build bridges to others and...

That is to use your style, because God has given you, each of you a unique style to share Christ with those around you and not all of us have the same style. The problem most of us when we think of how we are to witness we immediately think of one of the most evident and one of the most important styles of witness and that is to Confront, to literally confront people with the gospel of Christ. Turn or burn! [pause for slight congregation laughter] Get right or get left! [pause for slight congregation laughter] I think you've heard and seen that type of thing. In fact so many people are afraid that if they're gonna witness for Christ that they have to be some sort of a flaming evangelist and button hole people

Well, I want you to know God uses those who **CONFRONT**. In fact there are people who are just waiting to be confronted with the message of Christ and God uses and has used many with that gift. One of the things I love about our Pastor is that God has given him the ability and he faithfully uses the pulpit every time he speaks to confront people with the claims of Jesus Christ. That's his gift! While the gospel is confrontational not everybody is most effective by confronting.

For others of us we are given the ability to **CONVINCE**, that is we are able to talk and dialog with people and to help them to begin to know more about Christ. I think about a member of our church, Josh McDowell, who's written a number of books on biblical apologetics and who's been able to help to persuade those who were skeptical, who were unsure, who thought that there was no validity of the gospel, to convince them to come to Christ. So for some of us there's the style of confronting. For others there's the style of convincing.

And still for others there's the style of **CONCERN**. You may not be able to confront or convince but you have the ability to express concern and your concern for people in your sphere of life begins to be the bridge that opens their heart to hear the message of Jesus Christ. Now just as we say that words without action are of no use, so it is true that actions without words are of no use and just being kind to everybody is not enough there must be a way to share. But many times your gift of concern can be used of God.

And then for others of us there's the ability to just **CONVERSE**, to just day by day talk about Christ, about what He's done in our lives, about how He's changed our lives and just in conversation, a, just speaking a name, a, a, a good word in the name of Jesus to others. Conversations can open the door that one day will become the bridge to share Christ with those about you.

Possibly one of the most effective and most important ways that we can all

build bridges, it's not just through confronting and convincing and concern and conversation but ultimately the simple little way of just saying "**COME**." Would you come with me? George Barnum in his research says that 1 in 4 Americans have said they'd go to church if somebody would just invite them and ladies and gentlemen one of the greatest ways that you can be used of God to make a difference in the life of your friend is to simply look at that friend and say, "*Would you come and come with me, come and see!*" And I can tell you that if they come to Prestonwood they're gonna hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and when they come they will hear that claim and have to deal with the claims of Christ upon their heart. So it's your story. It's your style.

Then ultimately it's your support in witness. You have to always remember that if I'm going to be used of God then I have to rely, not on my strength but on His strength. He said, you have not chosen Me but I've chosen you and appointed you and therefore effectiveness in witnessing as so well articulated by Bill Bright is simply this, "Sharing Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God." You see, you cannot fail in witnessing, you only fail if you fail to witness and to use your style and your story and to rely on His support to make a difference in your life.

What's this all about? It's July 2002. It's hard for me to believe what we have witnessed since July 2001. Almost everything in our world seems to have changed in a year but I want to ask you som-thin this morning. Has anything changed in your world? Has anyone been changed by your friendship and your witness for Christ. When the calendar closes on 2002 will it simply be a year where you've attended worship and Bible studies and conferences but ultimately your life has left no lasting impression for eternity on the life of someone else. I want to challenge you this morning to be a friend indeed, to enter into that relationship with Christ, to see His involvement in relationships in your life and ultimately to let your life be a bridge that can be used and that you would begin today to pray and say, "*God I don't want 2002 to end without my life and witness influencing one person to come to Jesus Christ.*"

Now there are another group of you here this morning and while the heartbeat of this message has been to many believers who are here some of you are here and you're seeking and you're not a believer and you're not connected in some way to this church or to any church and frankly the more I've talked the more your sittin here thinkin, "*Hey, I'm the target, they're talkin about me, they're comin after me.*" Well, your right. Ha! [pause for slight congregation laughter] Except let me just be sure that I make it clear, you're not my target, you're not our target, you're God's target! God is interested in your life. The Bible says that, "*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life.*" If we take that out of the general category and personalize, think about what this says to you. For God so loved, put your name in that blank. For God so loved you that He gave His Son Jesus that if you would believe in Him you would not perish but you would have life, you would become the friend of God. Your life

would be changed. Your relationships would be changed and today more than anything else friend our greatest desire would be for you to know Christ and to know Him personally. Before we walk out of this building we're going to pray and then we're going to stand and sing and we're going to invite people just like you today to put your hand in His hand extended to you. All you have to do is to believe and to receive what Christ has done and today you can leave here knowing that you have a sure secure relationship with Jesus Christ. For others of you today you've put your hand in His hand. You can say Jesus is my friend but Jesus made it clear that is you're My friends you do what I command you and one of the things that He has clearly commanded is that we are to identify with Him publicly in baptism, declaring that we are no longer the old person we are, we've been buried, we're new in Christ and today if you've never been baptized I want to encourage you to come, many of you to lead the way and say I want to follow Christ in baptism. Others of you may want to come join hands with us and become friends with the Prestonwood family that together we could be friends indeed to our community and make a difference for Christ. I don't know what God's speakin to your heart but I know that He's calling, I know that He's working, I know that the Spirit is speaking and this morning in just a moment after I've prayed we're gonna stand, we're gonna sing, pastors will be in the balcony at each of the banners, they'll be here at the front and today we want to invite you, to lead you, to help you to be followers of Jesus Christ, to be friends of God.

Father, I thank you today for the incredible thing that You have done in sending Jesus to die on the cross, to provide friendship status with You and I pray that every person in this room would look and examine their heart and their life [soft background piano music starts] and would question whether or not they are Your friend and whether of not they're living to lead their friends to Christ. I pray, Lord, that You would put people and people's names on our hearts today and I pray that we would go out of here to be friends indeed. But Lord right now I ask that You move and that You work, that You guide and that You steer people in this place into the hands of Jesus for it is in His name that we pray together. Amen