



STUDY GUIDE

January 29, 2023

Message Series:

A Better Way

Message Title:

To Have Friends

Teaching Pastor:

Elijah Schiarelli

Warm-up/Icebreaker: (10 min) Share briefly how you met your closest friend(s).

Pray: Dear Lord, we are grateful for this time to draw close to You and also to one another as we learn now about the value of friendships. Open our eyes to the things You want us to see and open our hearts to be changed by the truth of Your Word. We ask that your Holy Spirit would guide and direct our conversation and that it would be honoring to You in every way. We pray all of this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Get Started: (20 min.)

"It's not overselling to say our ever-deepening relationship with Jesus Christ critically depends on our intentional investment into real friendships." - Pastor Elijah Schiarelli

- Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Explain and/or share examples from your own life experience.

"Real friends encourage me to do what is good and right and forgive me when I get it wrong." - Pastor Elijah Schiarelli

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11, John 15:12-13, and Galatians 6:2.

- How have you lived into these verses? Describe a time when a friend encouraged you during a difficult time or perhaps you encouraged a friend that was going through a hard time. What specifically did you (or they) say that was so encouraging?

"Real friends Don't let me off the hook and always point me back to God. This, more than anything else, is where most of our friendships lack. Being called out by someone else rarely feels good. But when that person is someone you trust who knows you, cares deeply for you, and is always looking out for what God has for you, then you can be confident that when they don't let you off the hook, they're doing it for your good!" - Pastor Elijah Schiarelli

"Be willing to have the hard conversation when needed. Be willing to put everything out in the open with your friends. Ask their permission to speak into their lives anytime you sense they need it whether they come to you or not, and, this is key, give them permission to do the same. When this happens, your lives will truly be an open door to one another, fully committed to helping one another follow God in every aspect of your life" - Pastor Elijah Schiarelli

- What do the following verses teach us about accountability in our relationships with our friends?

Read Proverbs 17:17, Proverbs 27:9, Proverbs 27:6 in the Amplified version.

- Share a time where either you confronted a friend with the truth in love OR a friend confronted you with the truth in love. What occurred and what was the outcome?

Watch and Discuss Video (running time 12 minutes - 20 minute discussion)

- In the follow-up video, Pastor Elijah talked about how real friends allow you a safe space to vent and grieve but they don't let you wallow there. Describe a time where someone has done this for you. How did they help move you from a place of wallowing into a place of moving forward?

For deeper study, read the book of Ruth (4 chapters) and journal what it says, what it means, and how you might apply the principles God reveals to you in your own life.

Reflect and Commit: (20 min.)

"When we're intentional, vulnerable, and willing to do the things that real friends do for each other, God can use us to set each other free. Like Paul, we'll be able to come out of hiding and find our place among people who love us and care for us. Like David, we'll have our eyes opened to where we can be better and stay fixated on God. With real friends, we can be free from our past, free from fear, free from isolation, and free from loneliness." -Pastor Elijah Schiarelli

- How has God used the friendships He has placed in your life to set you free from the past, free from fear, free from isolation and loneliness. Give specific examples.

Read James 2:23, Psalm 25:14, John 15:14-15.

- Have you ever thought of God as a friend?
- What do these verses say about friendship with God? What actions or choices are required to be a friend of God? What are some of the benefits of being God's friend?
- Is God prompting you to make any specific changes, either in your relationship with the friends he has placed in your life OR in your relationship with Him? Share briefly.

Gather prayer requests and pray. (5-10 min.)

Pray: Dear Lord, thank You for who You are. You are not only the sovereign Creator of the whole universe, but You are also our close, personal and intimate friend. It is hard to comprehend that You are both, but we acknowledge and accept it by faith. Thank You for the relationships that You place in our lives. We accept that those relationships are there by divine appointment and that You desire to work through those relationships to refine and grow us and to draw us closer to You. Help us to be intentional, vulnerable, and willing to do what You have called us to do in these relationships. We pray all of this in Jesus' name. Amen.