



Befriend

A Case for Befriending



Leader Check-in

Name a few characteristics that you feel are necessary for friendship.

Discover

Read Romans 7:14-25. What kind of connection do you have to what Paul is saying here? Have you felt like Paul does in verse 24?

How big of a role does this kind of negative self-concept affect how we connect with others, and how we may think others view us before we even meet them?

What do you think about the three types of lesser friendships Pastor Sauls talks about as digital, transactional, and the one-dimensional friendships? Why would these be “lesser”?

In what ways could you relate with the two testimonies from the video?

Fully Own

Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21. As a group, walk through each of the verses in this passage and discuss their meaning and how understanding them helps us develop better relationships?


How would our relationships, lives, and communities be different if we fully accepted the fact that Jesus has paid for our wrongs and made us complete and worthy of love and respect?

Why does it also take community for us to get past our own shame and self-doubt?

What do you think about Pastor Sauls conclusion that our ability to be transparent and self-disclosing is what allows us to build authentic relationships by knowing and being known?

Challenge

Read John 15:12. Being loved and accepted by Jesus is one thing. Being loved and accepted by the people in your group is another. How can your group begin to show the love of Jesus by being more transparent and accepting in the next few weeks? Pray for the power to do it.





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Befriend the God Who Embraces You



Leader Check-in

Over the past week, how well did you do at thinking positive things about yourself because of what Jesus has done for you? Did this make a difference in any new relationships?

Discover

How easy is it for you to distract yourself from your relationship with God?

Read Genesis 3:6-13. Pastor Sauls comments that when we are self-centered and sinful we begin to hide and end transparency. How does this affect our relationships?

How have you seen self-centeredness lead to defensiveness and blaming others?

Read Philippians 1:6. How do you handle the balance between knowing Jesus paid for all our missteps, and yet God's work is not yet complete in us? What does this mean for relationships?

Fully Own

Read Luke 10:38-42. What does it mean to have a busy heart? How can this lead to relying on achievement for personal value? How does this also lead to judging or condemning others?


Why would Jesus tell Martha that there are times where it is more important to be with Jesus than to be busy for Jesus? Can you see this from Martha's point of view?

Read Galatians 5:22-23. Why does Pastor Sauls say it is important to stop trying to be like Jesus, and to start being with Jesus?

Read John 15:4. How can it be that we learn to produce the fruits of the spirit by being with Jesus, rather than achieving them through our own effort and discipline?

Challenge

What does it mean to you to be with Jesus? How well do you do at spending time with Jesus each day? How can your group work together to spend more time being with Jesus this week?





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Recognize Our Weaknesses



Leader Check-in

Did you spend more time with Jesus this week and if so did you notice a difference?

Discover

How often do you think people justify mean or rude behavior by saying, “We all sin” or “I am only human”?

Are there still areas of your life or past that you feel you have to hide? Do you think you can feel truly loved and accepted if you have to hide parts of who you are or were?

Read Romans 8:1-2. Jesus has accepted all of who you are. What would it feel like if you were able to share the dark parts of your life and still be accepted by the people closest to you and in this group?

Read Luke 15:11-21. Matt, from the video, had to get arrested and hit rock bottom before he could share his issues with his wife. Do you think you need to wait to hit rock bottom to be honest and find healing and acceptance?

Fully Own

Read 1 John 1:5-10. What happens to us as we hide dark parts of our life from others? How would you describe the courage it takes to lay the darkness out to others?

Why is it important for us not only to confess our sins to God, but also to those God has placed closest to us?

Read Galatians 3:26-29. How well do you do at loving and accepting all people, both in the church and those that have not made it just yet?

Challenge

As far as you group is able, share something you know you want to be free of, and remember if we can't shine the light on the darkness we can't overcome it.





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Overcoming Fear and Prejudice



Leader Check-in

How did this week go after last week's discussion and sharing?

Discover

What are some groups of people that you find are harder to love, accept, or hang out with?

Read Luke 18:9-14. What areas of our current culture do you see people looking down on those who see things differently than them? What issues do you see this causing in America?

How does our fear play into our prejudice and distancing ourselves from others? Why does Jesus say that the tax collector was justified before God, even though he is a sinner?

Read Luke 18:15-17. The disciples felt Jesus was too important to waste His time with babies and children. What subtle areas of fear and prejudice do you feel from "church" people?

Fully Own

Read Galatians 3:26-29. Do you believe that God is calling all people to Himself and that in Christ there is no division? If this is true, how should we treat even those furthest from God?

Take a moment to pray and ask God to reveal to you your hidden prejudice or fear of others.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-20. What does it mean to be an ambassador? What does it mean to reconcile people to God and how do we do it? How does our prejudice hinder this process?

Do you feel it is a sin to not share the good news of Jesus with those you feel most distant from?

Read Galatians 6:1. How can you help each other face your fears and prejudice?

Challenge

Name one or two steps you can take to reach out to those you keep at a distance. As a group pray for diversity and love to fill your life.





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Seek to Understand



Leader Check-in

Did you have a chance to connect with a more diverse group of people this week? Explain.

Discover

Share a time when you felt misunderstood and alone and felt unable to connect with others?

Read Luke 6:37-38. These verses walk us through judging leading to condemnation, but forgiveness leading to generosity leading to abundance. How have you seen or experienced each of these?

Read Galatians 3:26. In your experience, how has, or hasn't, the church felt like a family as Pastor Sauls described? Which do you think most people experience from church and why?

Why do you think Jesus makes such a big deal about reaching the lost and hurting?

Fully Own

What would it mean for your group to actively seek out someone that is a bit of an outsider and ask them to join your group? Are you willing to pray for greater diversity for your group?


Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-14. Pastor Sauls mentioned these verses to remind us that if we are Christian, then our first family and body is the church. Can you make a case for this?

Read Luke 7:36-50. How do you think the woman in this passage would be treated if she attended our church, or your group? How often do you pass judgement based on what people wear to church? Does this draw you closer to them or push you further apart?

For some people their social disgrace is easy to see. For many others, we have learned to hide it well. Can you have empathy on those that are not as adept at hiding their issues?

Challenge

Can you think of a person or people at church that are isolated and alone even though they are part of the body of Christ? Pray for them as a group. Spend some time with this person or people this week and see where it goes.





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Love



Leader Check-in

How did connecting to “others” go this week?

Discover

What does the love of Jesus mean to you and how do you love others with it?

What is the definition of an “underdog” friend? Do you have a few underdog friends?

Read Luke 10:25-37. Make a list of what it cost to help the underdog in this passage, and another list of what was gained by helping the underdog in this passage? What is gained by the underdog?

What does Jesus say is at stake in the passage in dealing with the underdog? Why does love require action?

Fully Own

Read 1 John 4:19 and Romans 5:8. How do these verses show real love and the action to back it?

In Ron’s story he said he spent an hour on his Bible homework, but he was challenged to spend a fraction of that time actually sharing what he knew about Jesus. How balanced are you at being in God’s word and sharing it weekly?

Read John 13:34-35. Is love more apparent in your life now than before you accepted Jesus? How would you describe the difference? Who else would know and see this difference in you?

How would you describe true friendship and how has this kind of friendship grown in your life? Do you feel people know there is something different about you because of how well you love?

Challenge

Ask God to bring one person into your life that you can be challenged by to demonstrate the kind of love Jesus calls us to. Share your stories over the next few weeks as a group and see what God does.

