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## Friending

### Part 2 – A Friend of Sinners, but not the World

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As I said, we're in the second part of our *Friending* series. I've got the opportunity and, honestly, the honor to come and teach on what it means to be a friend of sinners, but to not be a friend of the world.

About 12 years ago, I moved to the Branson area and got into the real estate market. I had a client who was a new magician in town. He was kind of a fresh face. I showed him a bunch of property and we got to know each other really well because we spent a lot of time together. The more time we spent together, we just built a friendship and really enjoyed each other's company.

He was very kind to me and would invite me to the show and I go to the show. Then he would invite me to the parties and then out to the bar afterwards. At that time in my life, I was coming out that kind of lifestyle, which was very devastating to my life. I was really in a phase where it was a very tempting prospect, but, by the grace of God, I was able to say no in those moments.

After a while, I realized that he was inviting me over and over again to be a part of his life and I had really reached out to him very little. One day, when we were out on the road looking at houses, I invited him to come to Woodland Hills Family Church and he laughed in my face. He said something that I'll never forget. He said, "If I walked in the doors of your church, they'd have to burn the place to the ground." I thought to myself, *Wait a minute, bro, you don't understand. Our church is in a magic castle; you'd fit right in!* If a magician could feel any more at home, I don't know where it would be. Anyway, he declined my request kindly.

But, somewhere along the line in his life, he felt or at least... I don't know if it was projected upon him or it actually happened, but he was vilified in view of the church, so whatever his lifestyle was or the choices that he'd made or the paths that he had walked through, he felt like there was no place for a guy like him in a church. Really, that is so sad because the truth is that Jesus, when he spoke of the physician, he said, "The physician doesn't come for those that are healthy; he comes for those who are sick." So, ultimately the church is a place for sick people and there is no sickness that could possible disqualify you from coming and meeting the Great Physician.

I look back on that and I'm sad. I'm sad that my friend felt like he was an outsider or felt like he was vilified or potentially even an enemy of the church because his lifestyle went against the teachings of Jesus and the things he associated with the church for so long.

This morning, we are going to talk about that. We are going to talk about what it means to be a friend of sinners, but not of the world. This church works very hard at creating an environment and an atmosphere where non-believers or those who are searching can come here and feel comfortable and safe. The reality is that people are not our enemy. Satan and his fallen angels are our enemy and they are holding people captive. It is Jesus who has a desire to set those captives free. He is patient, wishing that none would perish and that all would come to repentance.

So, people aren't our enemy; people are actually our mission. We're going to talk about this in a second, but the idea of ambassadorship that we've been charged with is that we would be people who would go to a foreign land, as aliens and strangers, living in a world that's not our own, and we would look differently, talk differently, and we would act differently and we would represent what home is all about.

The reality is, for those who follow Jesus, our home is heaven; it's not this earth. This is not our final... This is just a short blip in our lifetime in eternity. In our home in heaven, Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us. The scripture says that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has fully comprehended all of the things that he has prepared for us. Heaven, our home, our citizenship is in the kingdom of Christ. In that kingdom that awaits us, there will no longer be any tears, any mourning, any sadness. Sin and death will be done away with. It is a place of everlasting joy. That joy is our inheritance. And to think that inheritance is ours despite the sin and rebellion that we have lived in. To think that, in God's grace and his mercy, he has provided a way for us that when we were at our very worst, Christ died for us and our sins were forgiven. When those sins were forgiven, heaven became our home, it became our eternal resting place.

For me, Shay Robbins, the freedom that I gained when I gave my heart to Jesus, it brought belonging, it brought peace, it brought the freedom from shame and condemnation. It gave me a family and it gave me a heavenly home that awaits me.

I owe all of that to one man named Sean Peterson, who, 14 years ago, set out to be my friend. As he developed a friendship with me, he shared with me the greatest gift that I've ever received and because of that friendship, according to James 5: 20, my soul was saved from death and a multitude of sins was covered by the blood of Jesus. In my Bible, to this day, under James 5: 20, Sean Peterson's name is written down right there. Every time I read through that chapter and I land on his name, I think about the friendship that pulled me out darkness.

It is my heart's desire that I would be a man whose name would be written under James 5: 20 in other people's Bibles. It's my prayer and hope that this church... that our names would be written under James 5: 20 in the Bibles of the people within our community. That we would be friends with sinners in such a way that we pull them out of the muck and the mire of the sinful broken world. Amen?

So, that's what we're talking about today: *A Friend of Sinners, but not of the World*. The point that runs all the way through this is that **sinners are reconciled to God through friendship**. Now, don't be confused. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father, but through

him. But, friendship is a vehicle through which we find our way to Jesus. Each one of us can be that facilitator of reconciliation.

We're going to look at that idea in 2 Corinthians 5 (NASB). ***17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.***

So, our friendship... If truly Jesus has been a friend of ours, he's passed on this ministry of friendship that we might turn around and that God, through us, would make an appeal to those who are not in right standing with God, that we could usher them in to relationship with Jesus through friendship.

If we're going to look at friendship... If we set out, if that's something you buy into... If you're like "I want to be a friend of sinners, I want to be that kind of man or woman," it is wise for us to go to the life of Jesus, our premiere example and see how he carried himself, to see what kind of friend Jesus was to sinners.

I want to start in John 8: 2-11(NASB). This is an awesome story. ***2 Early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to him; and he sat down and began to teach them. 3 The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court, 4 they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. 5 Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?" 6 They were saying this, testing him, so that they might have grounds for accusing him.***

***But Jesus stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground. 7 But when they persisted in asking him, He straightened up, and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." 8 Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.***

***9 When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and he was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court.***

***10 Straightening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?"***

***11 She said, "No one, Lord."***

***And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more."***

Here's why I think this story is really important within this conversation. Jesus went in to teach and the Pharisees, the religious people who lived a highly moral life, brought a woman in and they threw her before the feet of Jesus. She was a woman who was caught in the act of adultery. They wanted to see how Jesus would respond to this woman's situation. Jesus bent down in the face of these religious,

righteous, highly moral people and he began to write something in the loose dirt of the temple. We don't know what he wrote. In fact, I think it's one of those things that we'll ask Jesus: "What did you write when you bent down there?" Whatever it was, when he wrote... I believe that it was conviction that came over these men. No one, not a single one picked up a stone and they ran out of there. I think it's important for us to look at the situation and to honestly ask ourselves which role we are playing. Are we playing the role of the Pharisee who is casting judgment on other sinners in my right standing and my highly moral lifestyle?

We see that Jesus rebukes them and sends them running. I think it's important as believers, on a daily basis, that we would analyze our hearts, that we would just take a spiritual inventory to ask ourselves, "Lord, what is it that I need to deal with this morning?" Because if I wake up and I take off on my day, my natural inclination probably is to fall in the realm of being judgmental or critical of other people. Specifically, people who don't live the way I live. But, as we take spiritual inventory, as we examine and probe our ways, God will remind us, "Hey, you are a sinful creature. Do you remember what I've pulled you out of?"

Jeremiah says it this way. He says, "Who is any living mortal or any man to offer complain in view of his own sins?"

Often times in the morning, when I spend time with the Lord, I think about that and God will generally put me in my place and it will change my perspective on the day. In fact, I think it's a really healthy practice to wake up and, as a Christian, remember yourself at your very worst. You might be the only person in the world who actually knows you at your worst. But, remember that so that you would remember from where God has brought you. What that does is it takes away a critical and judgmental nature and it stirs up compassion for those who are sitting in the seat that you once sat in.

That's the way Jesus engaged this woman. **Jesus didn't project morality onto her, but he met her need** and her need in that moment was a desperate need of forgiveness. She was thrown before his feet and shamed in the public arena. Jesus met her right where she needed to be. One of our mistakes as the church, historically, has been to take our morality and put it on other people who don't share the same faith and then judge them when they don't live up to it. Isn't that a silly thing when you think about it? We shouldn't expect non-Christians to act like Christians because ultimately the reason that we follow after Christ and we walk in obedience is because of the love relationship we have with Jesus. After all, it's not the wrath of God that leads people to repentance; it is the love of God, the kindness of God that leads us to repentance. And we get to see how Jesus, delicately and with kindness, dealt with this woman.

Dick Foth was here a couple of weeks ago. He just has this knack for saying things that just sear into your brain. And even two years ago, I remember a statement he said. He said, "Kindness is the currency of heaven." So, if my home, my heavenly abode is in heaven, then like Jesus, as I walk in the footsteps that Christ did, I want to use kindness and I want to pray that out every chance I get to build friendships with people who don't know him.

Just to kind of bring home this point, I ran into this video on Facebook and I think you will be blessed by it. [Video plays]. I have to say that Woodland Hills is not affirming worldstarhiphop.com. They just have a great video.

This waiter walks into Don Pablo's, after having a bad day, and he meets somebody in the blessing business. Isn't that awesome? He was met with kindness. If you watch the waiter, his countenance when he walked up and his countenance after he had been blessed changes. He turns to putty in the arms of a stranger. That's just a little window, kind of a snapshot of what our relationships should look like with sinners. To be such a blessing to them that the walls come down and they become putty in their hearts.

Here's the reality. He designed us to know and to be known. Out there in the world, most people truly just aren't known. It's as easy as starting to ask great questions because people like to talk about themselves, but to listen and to know and to shower people with kindness will open up opportunities. Imagine if that guy invited that young man to church, I would say the odds would be pretty good that he would show up. If that's the blessing business, I would want to be a part of it.

The next passage we'll look at is just continuing in this idea of taking a look at how Jesus loved sinners and what kind of a friend he was.

Luke 19: 1-10 (NASB) - ***1 He entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 And there was a man called by the name of Zacchaeus... You might know a little childhood tune that goes with this story. ...he was a chief tax collector and he was rich. 3 Zacchaeus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. He was a wee little man. 4 So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see him, for he was about to pass through that way.***

***5 When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house."***

***6 And he hurried and came down and received him gladly. 7 When they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."***

***8 Zacchaeus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much."***

***9 And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."***

So, Zacchaeus was a tax collector and, in that day, a tax collector was thought very poorly of. They were thought to be a trader because they were Jewish people who turned on Jewish culture and began to work for the Roman government. Often times, as they would collect taxes, they would squeeze a little bit out of their brothers and sisters to pad their own pockets, so they had a terrible reputation and were categorized as sinners.

We see how Jesus interacted. Regardless of what the religious people thought, he engaged with Zacchaeus and was willing to go into his environment, into his home.

I think what's really important for us to recognize is that as he entered into Zacchaeus' home, he was a man on a mission because the Son of Man came to seek and save that which was lost. You see, **Jesus was purposeful in his friendships and our mission, as believers, is to seek and save the lost.**

When I got into youth ministry years ago, one of my mentors told me there are a lot of youth pastors out there that will spend time with kids and they'll build a relationship over a period of time before they share Jesus with them. He said, "Don't waste a single opportunity. Season every opportunity with the love of Jesus."

In Colossians 4: 5 (NASB), I think it kind of affirms that concept. It says, ***Be careful in how you act with outsiders or with sinners, making the most of every opportunity.*** We see how opportunistic Jesus was. He's walking down the road and there's a wee little man up in a tree. He was like *look at this guy*. He took an opportunity and immediately, with that kindness, something snapped in Zacchaeus and he was ready to give away his fortune and follow Jesus.

We have the same responsibility to be opportunistic and to take the opportunities, those divine appointments that God places in our life and shower people with kindness and friendship. Watch what God will do through those friendships.

Now, what's really important as we engage with sinners is we need to **remember whose ballfield you're playing on.** This earth is not our home. Our home is in heaven. That means that we are in a hostile environment. I have a picture, kind of an illustration that will help us understand this a little bit more. This is Lambeau Field. Do we have an Packer fans in here? That is awesome. You're going to hate this illustration. For the sake of our illustration, the Bears are going to represent God's chosen people. And the Packer fans are going to represent sinners.

Here's the idea. When the Chicago Bears go on the road and they roll up in here, they are walking into a hostile environment. I wish I had one of those John Madden yellow pens so I could draw some plays up here. But, they walk into Green Bay and for years, we've had some serious problems up there because they have this guy named Clay Matthews, who's storming off the edge. He's got this blonde hair that's flapping in the wind like Sampson rebirth. He's got anacondas for arms. Then they have this other guy on the other side of the ball named Aaron Rogers who is a gun slinger 2.0 with ice in his veins. And then you look out in the stands and there are cheese heads as far as the eye can see. The whole place stinks like cheese.

There are only two places that are safe for the Bears. It's in their locker room and on their sideline. Those are the only places that they are safe. But, they didn't go to Lambeau Field to stand on the sideline. They have to get out on the field and play ball. Ultimately, that's where God's chosen people belong. They belong out on the field, playing ball.

What happens is when you walk into this hostile environment, the Packers are scoring touchdowns left and right, annoyingly so. When a Packer scores a touchdown, they do something that's called a Lambeau leap. For those of you who aren't football fans, a Lambeau leap is when they score a touchdown, they spike the ball, do their dance or whatever, and then they go and jump in the crowd. They have a really low wall and they'll jump into the crowd. The Packer fans will pour beer on them and send them back out. It's a big celebration.

As a Bear, you're probably looking at that and thinking that it looks like a lot of fun. It's kind of tempting. You're thinking, *Man, I would kind of like to Lambeau too.* Well, the moment you do, you're lucky to get your life back. You walk back out on the field with maybe just shoulder pads left because they are savages, savage cheese heads.

Here's my point. As God's chosen people, we can't stay in a holy huddle. If we sit on the sidelines or we're in the locker room, we're missing out. That's not the way that we've been called to play ball. Playing it safe is not the Christian faith. I'm guilty of this. I find myself praying for safety over my kids. To some extent, that's a good thing. but, I don't want to pray safety over them in regard to their faith. I want to pray that they would be dangerous Christians because you've got to step out on the field and play ball if you're going to be a Christian. But it is important for us to understand the context that we're playing ball in.

John 14: 30 (ESV) will open up this conversation. Jesus said this and this was nearing his time where he was going to the cross. He said, ***30 I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world...*** He's talking about Satan himself. ***...is coming. He has no claim on me...*** In other words, he can't touch him. He's got no power or authority over him, but he is coming.

Satan was given authority in Genesis. When man was created, God gave man stewardship. He was the boss over all of God's creation. But, Satan tempted man and man fell and man forfeited that rulership or that dominion over to Satan. For a time, God has allowed Satan to be the ruler of the world in his grand plan of redemption. Satan is the ruler of this world.

2 Corinthians 4 (NASB) adds to it. ***3 And even if our gospel...*** The gospel being the good news of Jesus Christ dying for the sins of the world. ***...is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 in whose case the god of this world...*** Again, Satan. ***...has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.***

You see, Satan is a deceiver and he has been a deceiver from the very beginning. He is the father of lies. It has been his goal from the very beginning that he would be God. Every false God that draws attention or worship, any idol that's placed in front of God, every bit of glory that falls on a false God falls on Satan himself. He has blinded the minds of the unbelieving. The earth, where we play ball, is his place and it is a hostile environment and it's important for us to understand that.

In James 4 (NASB), James lays out our really clearly. ***4 You adulteresses...*** He's talking to believers. ***...do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.***

This is strong language, isn't it? The language that Jesus used with the woman, the actual physical adulteress that was thrown before his feet, was kind, tender, and covered in grace. But, James, the half-brother of Jesus, is talking to Christians and he's speaking very bluntly. He calls them adulteresses. In other words, "You who have cheated on your first love. You who have walked away from your first love, don't you know that your friendship with the world is hostility towards God."

It's so important for us to understand that our mission is to love on lost people, to be friends with lost people, but the context that they live in, the things that they are participating in, we've got to be careful that we don't become fond of them. That fondness becomes a friendship with the world and that puts us at odds with our God.

The next thing I want to say is that we need to **remember where we have come from**. I feel like this is really important because the world itself... When Satan tempts people, he's going to tempt you with things that you have an appetite for. We are lost and broken and our flesh has a tendency to error towards sin and he's going to play towards those weaknesses. But, when we go back and we remember where we have come from, in other words, where God brought us out of, it will give us a sobriety as we encounter these different temptations in a world that is hostile to us.

Ephesians 2: 1-4 (NASB) says this: ***1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the air... Another name for Satan. ...of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were, by nature, children of wrath, even as the rest.*** That's where we've been brought from. What Satan will do is he'll always try and reel you back in with those areas of weakness. Perhaps those things that your flesh formerly would feast on. He's going to try and reel you back in because what he wants to do is he can't take your salvation, but he can ruin or taint your witness.

**A clear conscience is our most foundational evangelistic tool.** In other words, hypocrites make lousy ambassadors. A hypocrite is a Christian who is an alien and stranger, but begins to live like the culture that they walk around in. They begin to blend in or to conform to the patterns of this world. Essentially, they disappear and get swept away in a culture that is disobedient and at odds with God. That's where Satan wants to bring us.

So, living in this world, we need to be wary. The scripture says to be innocent as doves and to be shrewd as serpents. As we walk about and are creating friendships with sinners, we still have to protect ourselves from the temptation or the lure of the enemy because he wants to take you down. What happens when you don't have a clear conscience – perhaps there's sin in your life that's unconfessed and it's festering – is you'll miss in two different places. One place you'll miss is you'll be gun shy. When you have an opportunity to spark a friendship with a sinner and to share the love Jesus with them, you won't speak up because you'll know in your heart you're not walking the walk. "How could I possibly share with this person when my life is a mess?"

The other way we fail is perhaps we have the boldness to go ahead and speak up, but the people we're engage with are not fools. They see our lives and if we are living hypocritically, what we're doing is we

are damaging the message that we bring, we're disqualifying it. In other words, if they look at you and they say, "Well, your life doesn't look any different; why would I run off and follow Jesus when you're living just like me?" it's pointless.

To have a clear conscience on a daily basis is absolutely essential if you've got a heart to lead sinners into reconciliation with God. Not to mention to just have peace in your own personal life.

James 1: 13 (NASB) talks about temptation and Satan is going to come for us. We need to understand how temptation works and how we fall into it. ***13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God;" for God cannot be tempted by evil, and he Himself does not tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.***

In other words, when we face temptation... To be tempted is not sinful. In fact, God sent Jesus to be tempted in all things and to yet remain without sin so that he could overcome the power of sin and the grave. But, when we are tempted, the moment it becomes sin is when we begin to lust or to desire whatever that temptation is. From the moment that lust is conceived in our mind it is sin. It's sin before we ever act it out. Jesus said, "You've heard it said that it is a sin to commit adultery, but I say that it is sin for you to lust in your mind in a sexual way."

What we need to do is recognize that God has provided a way out. Whenever you're faced with temptation, he promises... This is an amazing promise. He promises that there is always a way of escape. One of the things that I really fight to do and I would encourage you, as a church family, is that we look for the window of opportunity before we walk into temptation. That way of escape is enormous.

Billy Graham was known for when he would go to a hotel out on the road, he would have the televisions removed from the room before he ever walked inside. The reason he did that is because there was a window of opportunity to avoid temptation before he ever walked into that room and so he had those televisions removed.

If we are shrewd, if we are innocent as doves and shrewd as serpents, when we walk into these situations where we are engaging a secular culture, we've got to keep an eye out for those things or situations that can put us in a place where we'll make a bad decision. There's always a way of escape when we walk with Jesus.

1 Corinthians 10 (NASB) says ***13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.***

As I mentioned before, I think that we're called to be dangerous Christians, not safe Christians that are standing in a holy huddle. We're called to go out on the battlefield and to go to war on behalf of the souls of men and women. There's a difference between being a dangerous Christian and being a foolish Christian. A foolish Christian will walk the line of temptation. They will get as close as they can, thinking

that as long as they just toe the line, they're not going to fall over. But, we've got to be honest enough with ourselves to know where our weaknesses are and rather than toeing the line, we need to run as far as we can from it.

For me, especially in my early stages of faith, as a babe in the faith, when I got those invitation to go out to the bar, I had to run away from that. If I would have walked into that situation, I would have made a massive mess of things. I know myself too well; it's a danger zone for me. As believers, I think it's wise to be honest with yourself. Where are your areas of temptation? Where can you be disqualified?

I think our phones are one of the most dangerous slippery slopes that we can have because you can fall into evil, nasty things in a blink of an eye. Perhaps that changes the way you use your phone. Perhaps that changes where you charge your phone at night. Perhaps that changes the kind of phone that you have. In fact, for a lot of young men, I urge them to get rid of the smart phone and get a flip phone. You laugh, but that smart phone is like putting a loaded weapon in the hand of a 13-year-old kid. They are going to pull the trigger.

If you're really serious about this, if you're serious about being a soul winner and being a friend of sinners, you've also got to be serious about the hostile environment that we live in and you need to protect yourself and put yourself in situations where you can walk in righteousness.

**Our friendship represents salt and light in a lost world.** Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes he shared in Matthew 5 (NASB) said, ***13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men."*** He uses this illustration of salt. Salt is used to bring flavor, to create a hunger and a thirst. So, as believers, we are to carry ourselves in such a way that when people are around us... Just like that man who sowed blessing into that young man's life. He created a hunger and thirst for the God that supplied that kind of kindness.

The he uses another illustration. ***14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; 15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.***

He uses this light analogy. One of my favorite song, as we sing the kids to bed every night, is "This Little Light of Mine, I'm gonna let it shine. Do we hide it under a bushel? No! I'm going to let it shine." We can't allow that light to be covered up in a holy huddle or standing on the sidelines or squared away in the locker room, playing it safe. We've got to pull it out from underneath that bushel and we've got to let our light shine amongst men.

Then here's what happens: they ***see your good works and they glorify your Father who is in heaven.*** That's exactly how Jesus carried himself and the world has never been the same.

Father, we thank you for clarity. Thank you for the power of friendship. I want to pray, God, that you would motivate this church body to be a friend of sinners. I want to ask, God, that right now you would

put someone's picture in our mind's eye, that we would see their face, somebody who doesn't know Jesus. I pray, God, that you would stir up a compassionate heart for them and that you would give us wisdom and opportunity to sow blessing into their life.

I'm going to pray, God, that those faces would fill the empty seats in this congregation, that they would become sons and daughters of the Most High and that they would be a part of this church body so that we could build them up.

It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.