

04/24/11

Friend Request #7 – When You Give and Receive Nothing in Return

- Let me ask you to consider this question this morning...
 - should you put more into a relationship than you expect out of it?...
 - I think it would be very interesting to have a conversation this morning with a group like this just about that question...
 - because I would really love to hear how various people in this room would answer that...
 - here's what I would assume...that most people here would say—yes, I believe I should put more into a relationship than I should expect out of it...
 - you might even say this morning that you believe you do that...
 - if that was a test this morning, you would pass it...
 - so we hear things about marriage for example...where it's not a 50/50 relationship...it should be 100/100...have you ever heard that?...
 - and the implication is that you should give it your best regardless...we should put 100% into our marriages no matter what...
 - or for other friendships – many here would say, at least in theory...yes I certainly try to put more into those friendships than I receive...I believe that...
- and that's all well and good...but now let me ask you this...
 - what if the person on the other side of the equation doesn't believe that?...
 - see, isn't that really the test...
 - not what we would say...but what we would do...if the other person who is supposed to be your friend is not working on, or contributing to the friendship the way you believe they should...
- for example, I'm sure there will be people here who would say...my spouse doesn't seem to be interested in working on this relationship...they are putting very little into it...
 - not that they are not busy around the house or whatever – but working on us, it's just not happening...
 - or with another friend...there's very little effort on their part...
 - you're the one who has to initiate the call...you have to send the first text...you have to plan the outings...you have to initiate communication if there's been some sort of problem or breach...
 - you seem to be putting more into the friendship than the other person...then what happens?...
- now let's push it one big step further...what if it's not just an issue of omission (they're not doing what they ought to do), but instead it's a matter of commission (they did something to you that wasn't the act of a real friend?...
 - what if that person seriously let you down?...
 - what if he disappointed you greatly?...
 - what if she betrayed you?...
 - what if he deserted you?...
 - what do you do with a person who is completely unwilling or unable to give anything in return?
- now, I realize that for many men and women here this morning, this is much more than a theoretical debate...

- you may have an x-spouse who promised to be your friend, and then treated you in ways that are despicable...and if you share the custody of your children...you cannot get away from having to deal with that person who hurt you so badly...
 - or you may have a friend or family member who betrayed you...or stabbed you in the back...
 - you just found out that they were gossiping about you, or laughing at you...
 - he said he was your friend and it was farce...
 - she said one thing to your face and something entirely different when you weren't around...
 - or maybe someone just cut you off...they won't return your messages...they won't communicate – they're just gone...
- here's my question – now what?...
- you've always believed you should more into a relationship than you expect in return...and now you clearly have someone, or maybe a lot of someone's, who clearly believe differently...so you're not getting anything back... now what?...
- here's an answer....it's at that point, that you truly, and perhaps finally have an opportunity to be just like Jesus Christ....
- and to learn what it means to live in His strength...to live of Him, and through Him, and to Him...
 - let's see if we can learn more about that this am...please open your Bible to Matthew chapter 26...page 22 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...
- our church's theme this year is Living Life Together...we're studying what God's Word says about being a place where it's for men and women to feel/be connected...
- one of the many metaphors the Bible uses to describe the church is that we are "the family of God"...and that's exactly what we want to be...where everyone coming has an opportunity to feel like they're part of the family...
 - and this is more than a slogan on a bulletin cover...
 - I'm hearing report after report of men and women taking steps to be more connected to their church family...
 - I ran into some folks at the hospital, late the other night...and they said that they had just been out to dinner with several other couples for their ABF (adult Bible fellowship, or Sunday school class)...and they had a great time doing that, but now they were visiting someone else from their ABF in the hospital...
 - that's living life together...
 - someone else told me this week that at the recent death of a loved one, what especially impacted her was the number of people from the church family and especially her ABF who took the time to attend the viewing...
 - that's exactly what we mean by Living Life Together...
 - being intentional about making and developing meaningful relationships in our church family...
 - and from an institutional perspective, we have to do everything as a church to facilitate this kind of environment...but then every person has to decide---am I going to take steps to be connected...do I value having spiritual friends the way the Word of God would suggest I should?....
- for the last six weeks, we've been doing a special series called Friend Request...the art of making, and cultivating, and keeping authentic friendships...

- here's the way we'd like to end this series this morning...by studying what should happen When You Give and Receive Nothing in Return.
- by this point in Matthew 26, Jesus and His disciples have celebrated the Passover in the Upper Room...In a tender moment of servant hood, He washed their feet...and He instituted the practice we refer to as the Lord's table...
- then He tried to prepare them for what was about to occur...but they weren't willing to listen...in fact when he told Peter that he would soon deny the Lord three times...Peter vehemently denied it...in fact, verse 35 says it like this...
 - Matthew 26:35 - Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You." All the disciples said the same thing too.
- there's a great group of friends, huh?...there's some guys who will always contribute more to the relationship than they'll take out of it...
- then Jesus leads them to the Garden of Gethsemane, and invites the disciples to pray with Him prior to all of these events He's been explaining to them about His death, burial, and resurrection actually occurring...
- isn't it great that He has a group of faithful friends to pray with Him prior to His arrest and crucifixion...
 - it would have been, were it not for the fact that they kept falling asleep...verses 42-46 are so tender...
 - read Matthew 26:42-46...
- now here's a picture that answers the "now what" question...what do you do when someone around you, or maybe a lot of someones....are unwilling or unable to put anything into the relationship...now what do you do?...
 - read Matthew 26:47-56...
- we're talking this morning about When You Give and Receive Nothing in Return.
- and from these verses...3 occasions that will test your ability to be a friend with new life coursing through your veins.
- because after all, it's Easter Sunday...and this isn't just a human discussion about how to deal with the challenges that go along with the imperfect men and women around you...
- this is about the fact that this story ends not just with the horrible death of our Savior on the cross for the sins of men, but with His miraculous resurrection over death...
 - making new life possible for people like you and me...
 - which is why the apostle Paul would say... 2 Corinthians 5:17 - If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.
 - that also why Paul would pray for people like you and me... Ephesians 1:18-20 - *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know...what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead...*
 - when do people like you and me especially need that power...and when can it especially be put on display?...
 - it's the very kind of situations we're discussing this morning...it's when the other person is unwilling or unable to give anything in return...
- I. Embrace New Life When Your Friend Hurts You.**
 - think about what these verses teach us about...

A. The treachery of Judas.

- the Bible tells us that Judas approached Jesus...”while He was still speaking” (beginning of verse 47)...still speaking about what?...
- 1. While Jesus was still speaking about the importance of prayer.
 - what an incredible conversation to interrupt with actions like this...
 - and Matthew reminds us...
- 2. Judas was “one of the twelve”.
 - he wasn’t some casual observer or someone who hadn’t been around very often...
 - he was one of Christ’s closest friends from a human perspective...someone who had heard more teaching and had access to more relational time than most other people on earth...he was ”one of the twelve”...
 - and at the very time Christ had been praying...
- 3. Marshaled all his human resources to ensure he would win the fight.
 - Matthew 26:47 – Judas...came up accompanied by a large crowd with swords and clubs, *who came* from the chief priests and elders of the people.
 - have you ever anyone do that to you?...where it’s a complete ambush where they are entirely loaded for bear...
 - you had no idea those divorce papers were in the mail and all the lawyers already have all their stuff lined up against you...
 - or she’s turned everyone in the office against you and you’re caught completely off guard...
 - or he’s called everyone else in the family and told his side of the story...
 - or worked systematically through the church directory before even telling you there was a problem...
 - while Jesus was praying, Judas was scheming...
 - while is why the title Matthew gives for him in verse 48 is...”he who was betraying Him...”
 - that’s why parents don’t normally name their sons Judas...did you know by the way that his name means “praise...” – one man’s treachery ruined a name from ever being used positively in that language again...
 - then he steps up with...
- 4. The most hypocritical greeting imaginable.
 - a. Hail.
 - which is a word that in the original language means “a hearty hello”...
 - isn’t that unbelievable?...you talk about receiving nothing in return...
 - b. Rabbi
 - which means teacher – and it’s interesting that you often see Judas using that word, instead of the word “Lord”...
 - that’s what Jesus was to Judas...an interesting teacher...but certainly not a Messiah who would pay for his sins or a Lord who was qualified to take charge of His life...
 - I wonder how many people will hear this message today and that sums up their relationship with Christ...
 - c. The kiss.
 - it’s amazing that this was the sign Judas used to signal to the crowd that this was the one to capture...
 - and it’s important to know that this was more than a quick cultural peck on the cheek...
 - katephilesev – “kissed him fervently”

- are you allowing the Word of God to have the impact on you that He desires?...
- I wonder how many people will be in church today who would greet Jesus with a hearty hello...and acknowledge the beauty of His teachings...and perhaps even metaphorically kiss him fervently...and the casual observer might say – he/she surely loves Christ...
- but the fact of the matter is, if you looked at the way that person lives behind closed doors...it's treachery...there's no real devotion to Christ there...
- what goes through that person's mind...the way they treat others...the way they order their schedule...the condition of their checkbook...
- "Hail, rabbi, and kissed Him" – what a chilling example of hypocrisy...

- but please note this...

B. The controlled response of the Savior.

- what would you have said if you, like Christ, knew exactly what Judas was doing...
- none of this was a surprise to Christ...
- what would you have said?...what would you have done in the heat of that moment of incredible behavior?...now what?...
- what did Jesus do?...
- "Matthew 26:50 - And Jesus said to him, "Friend, *do* what you have come for."
- that is power under control...
- that is why it was so important for Christ to spend time after the Last supper praying to the Heavenly Father...to be prepared for redemptive moments just like this...
- do you do that...on your way to work, do you say – Lord, help me to invest in the other people at work, and to do my job with great enthusiasm today, even if I don't feel like I'm getting the treatment, or the compensation I really deserve...
- and then when you're driving home...do you pray...Lord help me to be a godly husband/wife...and help me to invest in this relationship...to really work at it, even if my partner probably won't...
- or you're waiting for your kids to come home from school...are you praying...Lord, help me to be a godly parent today, even if my child is sarcastic again, or surely again...help me not to allow him to push my buttons because I'm not receiving the honor I truly deserve from my child today?...
- Jesus responded in a controlled fashion because He had spoken to the Heavenly Father about all of this, a lot...see, that's...

C. The significance of living vertically.

- 1 Corinthians 10:31 - Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
- theologians refer to this as living Coram Deo – before the face of God...
- believing that there is more going on here than my supposed friend not investing in the relationship right now the way I think he/she should...
- a sovereign God is at work...and I'm not going to miss His purposes simply because I'm not getting out of this relationship right now what I really want or think I need...
- now you might say – this is hard...that's right...
- and you'll never pull this off without the power of God at work in your life...
- that is why Jesus died on the cross...to pay for your sin and make the possibility of an entirely new and different way of living available to you...
- and when you repent of your sin and place your faith and trust in Christ...the Holy Spirit takes up residence inside of you...and now you can begin to put on His fruit...

- Galatians 5:22-23 - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...
- Can I ask you this morning...does the way you handle being hurt by your friends demonstrate the kind of self-control that is only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit of God?...
 - or are you here this morning and this area along with others would demonstrate that you have never truly trusted Christ as savior and Lord?...
 - if that's the case...or if you're not sure...I would urge you to use this opportunity to make a decision...
 - the exact nature of that decision is as different potentially as the number of people in the room...
 - but for some, it would simply be to do on Easter Sunday, what you know you should have done a long time ago...to admit your sin and place your faith and trust in Christ...plain and simple – you know the gospel...you've been around it, but you've never repented and believed...and today is the day for you...
 - for someone else, it might be to get some more information...why not decide right now that you are going to do that?...
- now, let's push further in the text...what can we learn from Peter's part in all of this?...

II. Embrace New Life When Your Friend Disappoints You.

- you could call this...

A. Peter's magnificent yet pathetic act.

- I'm taking that terminology from D. A. Carson is his commentary on Matthew...he said... "After repeated warnings of defection, Peter may have felt that the crucial test of loyalty had arrived. His is magnificent and pathetic—magnificent because he rushes in to defend Jesus with characteristic courage and impetuosity, pathetic because his courage evaporates when Jesus undoes Peter's damage, forbids violence, and faces the Passion without resisting" (D.A.Carson, Matthew, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, p. 547).
- and you have to have mixed emotions about what Peter did...at least it was something...but you wonder if he was motivated out of true love for Christ...or just the same bravado that caused him to brag about himself in the Upper Room...
- regardless, we know this...Jesus looked at this man, whom we learn in the Gospel of John was named Malchus...and according to Luke...
 - Luke 22:51 - But Jesus answered and said, "Stop! No more of this." And He touched his ear and healed him.
 - and the point from Peter's perspective was---Jesus had made it clear what was going to happen...this was time to submit to the Father's plan [that's what the prayer meeting was all about], not take matters into your own hands like a spiritual vigilante..

- but there's a huge lesson here isn't there...

B. Power is often best demonstrated when you choose not to use it.

- if Christ had wanted to deal with Peter, or the rest of the disciples, or with this angry mob with force, He certainly could have done it...
- Matthew 26:53 - "Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"

- you may have enough dirt on your x-spouse that you could shame and embarrass him or her for the rest of their natural life...does that mean you have to tell everyone about it, or constantly throw it up in their face?...
- you could say of the person gossiping about you – two can play this game...and create incredible turmoil in the office, or in your home...
 - would that really be an act of power...or would choosing to be godly even when you're not going to receive anything in return be the truly powerful act...that only the Spirit of God could make possible?...

C. Jesus chose to be gracious to someone who had no ability/intent of doing so in return.

- Can I ask you this – when is the last time you did something, or said something...without any thought of receiving something in return?...
- you functioned that way simply because you wanted to be a godly friend?...a sacrificial person?...
- we've had a great example of that these last couple of weeks with the men and women serving in our Passion Play...
 - night after night working on that presentation to the point of exhaustion...why?...
 - because they'll be receiving some sort of fat compensation check this week?...
 - no, because they wanted to be a friend to every person who came...period...
 - and when you stand out on the street outside the theater and meet some of the men and women who come...they probably will never be able to do much if anything in return...and you know what?...that's OK...
- here's something else we can bring into this discussion – it's the power of a whole church family seeking to live this way...
- Ephesians 4:16 - from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.
- the power of Christ's resurrection makes that kind of a life possible...
- can I ask you – are you part of a group like that?...
 - recommend Intro to Faith...

III. Embrace New Life When Your Friend Disappoints You.

- Jesus looked out at this mob and recognized many of them, humanly speaking...

A. These were some of the same people who had listened to Him teach the Word.

Matthew 26:55 - At that time Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as *you would* against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me.

B. Now they were watching Him live the Word.

Matthew 26:56 - "But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets."

- that's what gave Jesus the strength and power to be this kind of friend to every person in this story...when obviously He was going to receive nothing in return...

- and for the people in our church who choose to live this way – it would not be long into the conversation before they would say that it is their knowledge of the Word that directs them to live like this...
 - their personal study...
 - the truth they on Sundays in church and ABF's
 - their small groups...

- massive doses of the Word to help them be prepared to be a godly friend even when there is no hope of receiving anything in return...