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Forerunner Church
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Friendship

Well, good morning Forerunner Church. It's good to be with you this morning. As you may have discerned from the video that we just showed, we are emphasizing friendship and friendship groups the next couple of weeks. I'm not going to talk about friendship groups the entire message. I am actually going to talk about friendship. And my goal is to inspire you and provoke you and challenge you in regards to our understanding of what it means to be friends and walk as friends together.

Turn to Proverbs chapter 18 in your Bible. Also, if you would like to follow along with the teaching notes, those are available for free on our church website. So, the link is up right now, and you can follow along with those, download them, share them, do whatever you want.

Alright, I'm gonna read this from Proverbs 18, verse 24, "A man of too many friends comes to ruin but there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother." Like I said, we are going to talk about friendship today, biblical friendship, what does it mean to be and walk as a friend.

Really, our heart in this church, Forerunner Church, is that we want to see every individual involved in some sort of friendship group. It's not the only way that we experienced Christian community together, but it's one of the real easy and practical ways. We have a bunch of amazing friendship group leaders in our midst and actually just after the service if you want to hear more about how you connect to a friendship group, go and visit one. Go and visit a couple of times. You know, it's not like a lifelong contract or something that we are binding you into. You can feel free to jump in. We have these beautiful decorations that have been set up by our team, my wife and a bunch of others that have helped set those up. And we're going to be available after the service to just connect with you, get some information and answer any questions that you may have and that type of thing.

My heart is that we would be an Ephesians 4 community. We have talked about Ephesians 4 several times over the last couple of years. The Lord gave us a word that we would be a Zechariah 4 unto Ephesians 4 community and the short story of that that means or what I believe that means is that we would begin with the foundation of day and night prayer, that's Zechariah 4 and that the Lord would release the Spirit that would operate through the gifts of the body in Ephesians 4 and that through that we would come into maturity as one body before Jesus and in Him.

So, Ephesians 4, I just want to read this verse to you cause friendship groups really provide amazing context for you to operate in your gifts. You know in this room, every individual possesses gifts that have been granted to you by the Holy Spirit, gifts of healing, gifts of prophecy, gifts of administration and helps and hospitality and all these spiritual gifts are dynamic, they are meant to flow in the body of Christ.

And look what Paul says in Ephesians 4, I'll just read it to you so you don't have to turn there because I know you're back in Proverbs. Listen to what he says in verse 16, he says, "The whole body is joined and knit together" that's us "by what every joint supplies" that's the individual part, that's you, that's your role in this body. And whether you've been here for two weeks or 20 years, you have a role as a joint within this body to supply others, to supply the body of Christ in your sphere with the gifts from Christ that you possess. Okay? So, this is a charge to you. This is good stuff. "According to the effective working by which every part does it's share." That means that every individual, there's an accountability before the Lord that we would all operate in the gifts and minister to one another with our gifts. Why do we do that? Because when every part does it's share, he continues on at the end of verse 16, "it causes growth for the body and the edifying of itself in love." And the growth of the body that Paul is talking about here is not western church planting growth. It's not numerical growth. He's not saying, "Get everybody operating in their gifts and then you'll grow by a thousand more or something." What he is talking about is he's talking about the body of Christ growing into, he talks about it in the previous verses, into the person of Christ. And it's about maturity in God. It's about the body of Christ growing in maturity together and Paul is answering the question of how does that happen.

And so that is one of the many reasons why I believe that friendship groups, or something like that, is so critical for the body of Christ and it's what we've set up here and we have infrastructure for it and we make it easy, train, etc, etc. But this morning we are going to talk about friendship. Friendship, so there is a book by an author named C.S. Lewis. I am sure you have heard about C.S. Lewis and it's called "The Four Loves." And a bunch of the content this morning that I am covering, I've just stolen straight from him from that book, "The Four Loves." I encourage you to get that book, check it out. It's really insightful. It's really deep. It's really provoking, seeing Doug pump his fist over there. When you read that book you really get challenged on your ideas of these types of love that we exemplify and we both give and receive. And I am going to emphasize this morning friendship love.

I want to mention just the other loves that he talks about specifically in his book so follow along is you can. It's written in the handout on the notes online. I want to just mention them because he often compares them and some of what we will talk about this morning is comparing these loves one to another because it helps us get insight and get things more clear.

So, the first type that he talks about or emphasizes is familial love. Now, I've changed just a little bit of the terms just so it's easy to understand but familial love is essentially the love that we have for our families. There's a natural loyalty that's there. You know, you could grow up hating your sister, you know, because she is a couple of years older than you and punches you in the face all the time and makes your life miserable. But if someone threatens your sister, what happens? There's a love, a familial love, that kicks in to defend. Right? So that is the familial love.

Somebody once said about familial love, that your family is always there for you, even though they may not like you. That's just sad and true for many.

The second type of love is romantic love, and this is the love that we spend millions of dollars at the box office every year soaking in. It's the quickening of the pulse. It's they meet together. It's every Hallmark movie. You know, that she's a girl from a big city and he's a small-town guy and

she leaves on vacation and he's dirty cause he works on cars but they fall in love. But will they make it? Will they work it out together? I don't know. That's the romantic love. It sells. Romantic love sells man.

Alright then, the third type of love is neighborly love and that's just a general kindness, generosity, charity that we show to the people that are around us. It's the reason why you don't intentionally cut people off while you're driving unless you're from New York or New Jersey. And neighborly love is this kind of civil love that we have towards one another. It's the reason that you likely don't fear your neighbors. I put 'likely' in there but most of us don't fear our neighbors because it's like, 'Hey neighbor, hey.' And you know you kind of trade garden tools when you're short on something. It's just general kind of charity love.

Now there's friendship love, friendship love. And friendship love, as we will see, is a very unique love. It's one of the most, if not the most, unique loves. And one of the reasons is because it's voluntary. It's a voluntary love and it's also a set love. In other words, you choose to whom you're going to bestow friendship.

And I love it because throughout the scripture the Lord in all of these different ways in which he loves us, one of the most powerful ways that He expresses His love is set love, set affection. He chose us in Him. He didn't have to. You know He could have chosen to love anything and he could have chosen to create and love unicorns but instead He chose us. Right.

And so it's this 'set love.' I love this. Listen to this. Deuteronomy 10, verse 15, the Lord's speaking to the nation of Israel, he says, "Yet on your fathers did the Lord set His affection upon them to love them." And then He goes on, He says, "He chose their descendents after that, even you, above all peoples as it is this day." It's a set love. It's a voluntary love. And that's why I think it's one of the most powerful loves.

Let's talk about the nature of friendship under paragraph 2. the nature of friendship. The verse that we read, "A man of too many friends" Proverbs 18:24 "comes to ruin, but there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother." And that word 'friend' there that's used in the original language, it's literally a word for love. It's a word that's used for love and this is important to us. And I, because I think we have some real limitations in the way that we talk about and express love, we're really limited. We've like, run out of words. It's like, "I love it. I like it. I enjoy it." And that is. And in other languages, for example in Persian, there's over 80 words that are used to express various forms type and intensities of love.

I want to learn that language. Okay.

Also, Sanskrit, I found this so interesting the language Sanskrit has 96 words for love in that language. And in English we have one. Maybe that's why we love absolutely everything and yet we have lost the meaning of what it truly means to love something. Because the way we talk about love is, "I love everything. I love that wall. I love my kids." And it's the same word but there is no way that I feel the same way about that wall that I do my own children. And if I do, I need major help.

And not only do I love my kids, but I love my wife and I love my family and my friends, and I love our community and all of them pull on my heart in different ways and I also love Chipotle. And I also love Chick-fil-A sauce and I horde it at my house. If you come there I usually have hidden stashes of Chick-fil-A sauce. Why? Because I love it. And I don't have another word to convey how I feel about Chick-fil-A sauce. I am limited to my one word. Love.

But it creates a problem. It creates a problem for us because, not only have we lost the meaning of love but we may have lost the true meaning of friendship. And our understanding of friendship and relationship and love and affection gets all jumbled together. And sometimes it's helpful to part and parcel it out, kinda take a step back and examine friendship and examine these various forms of love actually in order to elevate them. Not to minimize them, not to say one is better than another but to equally enjoy all of them and set them into place. And I can guarantee something is going to happen this morning as we talk about this. You're going to think of your own relationships in your life. You're going to think about your spouse or your heart throb or your crush or your mom back home or your friend across the room or the person that wants to be your friend and you are like, "Ewww." There are going to be faces and names that are going to enter through your mind and that's good because I hope that it helps you to understand this type of love, friendship love and its importance.

Friendship is the rarest of all love is the rarest of all loves, like I said, because it's entirely unnecessary. And here is what I mean by that: Romantic love is really important to the human race because without romantic love you don't get babies. Romantic love is essential to who we are as the human race continuing on from generation to generation. We must have romantic love. We must also have familial love and affection because when you bring that baby home from the hospital or the birthing center or however you do it, you know, you bring that baby home and that baby's crying at 2 in the morning, it's not this cold stoic desire that gonna get you up out of bed to take care of that child. I remember looking at my son when we brought him home from the hospital, I was just staring at him and I looked up at my wife and I was like, "We have to take care of this thing forever like it doesn't stop." And it began to dawn on me that there is no vacation until he is like far far away and married with grandkids that I can give Mountain Dew to at 2 in the morning. You know like far far away. And you just keep taking care of it and it began to dawn on me. And began to imagine the way that my parents felt about me and like here I was as their little baby. And they're looking at me and they're like, "We have to take care of this thing." And there is some compulsion inside of mothers and fathers and grandparents and aunts and uncles and all these people that raise children. It's this deep familial love that's necessary so that they get baths and showers and fed and etc, etc. And not everybody is good at that but it is a natural love that occurs and it's necessary.

And then the third one is that neighborly love, that civil love. Why is that necessary? Well, it keeps our pets and our children safe outback when the neighbor is out there. The general, just kind of kindness and warmth that most people, especially I love the Mid West, express towards one another is critical to our safety. You don't live under martial law in a war zone in your neighborhood, most of you, now some of you do. And we need to get some civic love going in the neighborhood or whatever. But you get the general idea. It's necessary so that we are safe so that we don't all kill one another.

But friendship love stands alone, and friendship love stands apart on its own because it's completely unnecessary to your survival. You don't need it but you probably want it. Listen to what Lewis says on this, he says, "Friendship is unnecessary, it's like philosophy or art. It has no survival value rather it is one of those things that gives value to survival." I love that.

Friendship is the coloring that fills the pages of our life. You don't just need it; you could be very pragmatic about life. You know, have children, take care of them, don't punch your neighbor in the face. There it is, there's the three essentials. But beyond that, what is that really gives true meaning and life and value to what we do? And it's actually friendship love, the most unnecessary one.

Now of all the loves, romantic love is the most talked about and sung about in culture because it sells, everybody wants to talk about it. Everybody is interested in it. Movies, it's portrayed. It's written about in music. It's written about in books. People make billions and billions and billions of dollars talking about romantic love and what our culture has done it's elevated romantic love to be the highest love that you can experience in this life, it's the highest? Why, because it quickens my pulse and I get chills on the back of my neck and I am like, "Oh my gosh!" Romantic love and our whole society is running on this reach for romantic love. So you see relationships coming together and breaking apart in dysfunction and everybody is happy one minute and sad the next and on cloud nine one minute and then heartbroken the next because we've taken romantic love and we've elevated it as a society to the most powerful and most meaningful love.

But that's not actually the way it's always been. Actually, that's relatively a new idea. If you go back and read older writers, I'm talking even a couple a hundred years ago, if you go way back to even Greek philosophers they actually considered friendship love to be the highest most meaningful love that you can have because it's entirely voluntary. There's nothing natural in your body hormonally reactively intrinsically instinctively that promotes friendship love. It's entirely a choice. And when two people enter into that together, it's beautiful. It's beautiful. It stands alone and it stands apart in that way.

Because this love is I think the least required, you won't know if you have a true friend until the chips are really down in your life. Until things go really bad and wrong. Now when we think of things going bad in our lives sometimes we imagine it's like, well you know, our car broke down, somebody's got mono, somebody this, I'm short on my electric bill, whatever. And that is a bad thing. I'm not gonna lie, that's a bad day. But what about this, what about when your friend, because of their own character deficiencies, they bring problems on themselves? What about when they have actually brought it on themselves, it's not an outside force or something beyond their control like sickness or breaking down or whatever it is, your home bursts a water pipe. It's not an outside thing beyond your control? What about when it's actually you? When you're actually the one, or that friend is the one, rocking the boat because of your own selfishness, your own greed, your lust, your anger? What happens when you're actually the problem? And see when your character flaws are exposed, that's when you really know who your true friends are. Because, why should they still love you? You've proved them right. They already have their doubts about you and now you've openly displayed to them that it wasn't about circumstances or

fate or whatever kind of accident happened, you are the problem. And that is how you know when you have a true friend because a true friend will draw close to you even then. That is exactly what Christ did to us. It wasn't about the external things. It was about the internal brokenness, an internal deficiency and He looked at your life and He looked at mine and He saw through all of the junk and yet He still came and chose to set His affection upon you. He wanted you even when you didn't want you.

He loved you even when you were unlovable and me, the same. That's why it's such a powerful and beautiful love. In a similar way you won't know if you are a true friend until things turn really bad for one of your friends. So think of that scenario in the opposite, however you were imagining it before, but maybe you're not the one with the character deficiency but your friend is. Will you draw near to them? Will you walk through the valley of the shadow of death and the pain and all the things that have compounded upon their life, not by accident, but by their own choices, can you be a friend then? Can you come close to them then and see their value in the way that Christ does. You see, this friendship love is more than just we get together and listen to the same music. It's more than just we have similar tastes in cars or houses or whatever it is. Friendship loves touches something deep and raw within the human soul. Friendship is the least jealous of all loves. It often seeks to include others into the friendship, unlike romantic love which ought to be exclusive. Romantic loves doesn't invite in other parties into that love, into that sexual love, the sexual desire doesn't invite in other parties. It's exclusive. It's face to face. It's one to one.

Yet, friendship is the least jealous of all loves because it actually longs to invite others to the party. Because it's not just about the fun that I have with my one friend, it's about seeing the expression on my other friend when he makes the joke. It elevates the experience. You know when you have had a good time and you come home and you're telling the story like, "Oh my gosh we just had a blast we were just laughing and ha ha ha ha. Did you see?" You don't just recount the things that were said that were funny per say. You recount how people reacted to them. And then, you know, "He say and then she just loses her mind and she's ahhh and she runs out of the house, oh." And somehow, you see, when the party gets bigger with friendship the enjoyment factor goes up. You begin to see different aspects in people that are drawn out that are not drawn out if that other individual isn't there. If that third party doesn't join you then it's just the two of you, you probably have friends like that right now.

You probably have friends that when you go out to eat or you want to have coffee or you want to have someone other or whatever it is, you want to have that third party, that fourth party. You want to get the group bigger because it becomes more crazy and fun. You follow?

Lovers may become friends, but friends do not have to become lovers.

Let's talk about the challenge of friendship, the challenge of friendship. One of the challenges that we have is our cultural individualism. Cultural individualism essentially is this: when you come to a group you say, "What's in it for me? What do I get?" They look at their supposed friend or an institution or a work place or a church or small group or neighbor or whatever and they think, "What is it that you can give to me and how can you enrich my life?" In doing this they miss a foundational facet of friendship. It's actually the most important facet of friendship.

Friends look together at a shared vision. Friends look together at a shared love, a shared pursuit, a shared goal, a shared truth. Listen to how Lewis puts it and also, I want to give you a trigger warning so just know that. Okay. "We picture lovers face to face but friends side by side. Their eyes look ahead. This is why prophetic people who simply want friends can never make any. The vary condition of having friends is that we should want something besides friends. Friendship must be about something even it were only an enthusiasm for dominos or white mice. Those who have nothing can share nothing. Those who are going nowhere have no fellow travelers." I love the way that he puts that.

This what he's saying, in essence, "Friendship is often discovered on a journey rather than decided at the beginning before you leave the door." It's often discovered. It's often accidental. It's often incidental. How many of you have gotten stuck at the DMV for two or three hours and you become good friends with the people around you? You have a common vision. Leave. You have a common enemy, the ticket counter. And the guy that keeps leaving and somehow keeps getting back in line. How does that guy do that? He's just like, "Aw I just got to run home real quick. I live 45 minutes away. I'll be right back." And then he gets back in line. How does he do that? I don't know. I can't do that kind of stuff.

Friendship, that's discovered, often says this, "Oh you too?" When they find a mutual truth, a mutual love, a mutual vision or desire or whatever it is, that's often, more often than not, how friendship is actually formed. You go on a long road trip with a bunch of people you don't know, you'll become their friends. You go on a youth group mission trip to Mexico to help paint something. What happens? You become great friends with those people.

My buddy made me vow when we were younger that I would go on the "Price is Right" with him when he turned 18 so I am a little bit older than him. So, we waited and like on his 18th birthday he called me. He's like, "Hey." You know, we haven't even talked that much. "Hey, we're going to California, like, you gave me your word." I was like, "Oh well, that's expensive."

So, we went to California and we went and the way the "Price is Right" tickets work is they don't sell them before hand. It's first come first serve. You got to get out there on the streets of LA at 3:30 in the morning. So, we went. And we were with all these other, what I would come to soon find out, crazy people, very strange. I thought we were strange. They were very strange. And they are there and you know whatever, what happened, was you were with them for 12 hours just standing in line waiting for the "Price is Right" and brother Bob Barker to come out, man, the pastor for every home schooled kid from the 1990's, because it was always on at 10 am in the morning. Anyway.

So, we are out there in line and, you know, you are talking to people. I still remember the conversations and the faces and some of the names of the people that we met that were there. We became friends. But we weren't trying to become friends. It wasn't like, "Hey go join the friend line so you can become friends." That's weird. It doesn't work. We had a common vision and a common goal. It was like, win the big prize at the end. I can't even remember the name of it now. Showcase showdown. Thank you, Andy. Trying to win the showcase showdown and if you are within a hundred dollars you win both. We didn't win but I got more funny stories from that whole trip. Another time. Okay.

The worst way to find friends is to try and find friends. When you're solely looking for a friend you've make them the goal. But, you're not supposed to make them the goal. You're supposed to find a goal with what they're going for. Where are they headed? And you join a path and there's people on that path pursuing different things. You can find a path for pretty much anything that exists. There is someone that loves that thing more than anything else and you can join them and become their friend. It's kind of scary, actually.

Solomon say that a man of too many friends comes to ruin. Why? Because, you got too many birthday gifts to buy? I mean maybe that's part of it. No. It's because when you have lots of friends, I'm talking about deep friends, not acquaintances, when you have lots of friends, often times they all have different goals. They are on different paths and you're playing path hop. And when you're with this group you're pursuing this thing and when you're with this group you're pursuing this and you're hopping around. And that's fun when you're 25 but after a while it gets tiring. And then you begin to try and find those two or three in your life that are pursuing the same thing as you so that you can stand shoulder to shoulder with them. And that your eyes aren't focused on them, but you're focused on your pursuit together. That's why a man of many friends comes to ruin. He's pulled two different ways.

Why should we desire friendship? Proverbs 12, verse 26. Proverbs 12:26 says, "The righteous should choose his friend carefully." He is warning us. He's going, "Don't just hop on the bandwagon with the next person that rolls through that shares a just a common interest with you." He actually says, "Be careful about the friends that you choose. The way of the wicked will lead them astray."

The Christian should desire friendship not simply for the fulfilling nature of it but also because of the wisdom of it.

Proverbs 17 tells us an all too common thing that we've heard man times, "Iron sharpens Iron." See whenever you get into the company of friends there's collisions that happen. Iron comes in collision with iron. Sometimes it's not pretty. Sometimes your closest relationships are where there the most collisions. But that it actually good because if both of you are headed down the same path as your iron becomes sharpened you become more sharpened in what you're actually after. You become clearer about what it is you actually want. The problem is when we're not clear on what we want because we're still growing in the Lord and we have so many irons, so many different friends and positions and ideas and convictions and passions bombarding us that are close to us that as it's colliding with the iron of our spirit we end up off track from Biblical discipleship. We end up off track from the person of Christ and the beauty of Jesus. It's really easy to do. I've met a lot of people that idealize their friendships. They say, "Well I got a lot of friends who are" (I'll use the proverbs word, wicked). I got a lot a friends who are wicked but I'm gonna help them. I'm gonna show them Jesus." But what happens is that those relationships in their lives far outweigh their provoking Christ centered relationships and more times than not, they get off track. That's why Solomon is warning us here, "Chose your friends carefully." Choose them carefully.

Don't be too hasty to make friends and it's sad because so many are plagued with feelings of loneliness and rejection and all sorts of feeling, internally from our childhood and our upbringing, bad parent relationships and bad leaders that we had to interface with and we've been hurt and we've been bruised and there's this gaping wound of loneliness and we're just throwing ourselves at anyone that has a similar passion that we do. We're going, "Let's be friends."

And we're not yielding to the wisdom that Solomon's saying. He's going, "Alright if you throw yourself into a relationship, their iron is going to collide with your iron. And if you're not set, if you're not established and clear and focused, you're going to be sharpened in the wrong direction."

How many times have we seen that happen with friends, children? I mean it happens a lot more than we are willing to admit we are. What do we do? Be careful. Slow down a little bit. Let relationships develop. Don't jump on the path right away running full speed, just kind of saunter in. Check it out. Alright, I'm out of here.

Are character is likely the result, excuse me not likely, largely. Our character is largely the result of our community values. Wherever we're raised, whatever community we are from, whatever home environment we come from, we learn much of our character is formed by those community values. We rarely have the wherewithal and the understanding to form them on our own. Actually, I will just say it stronger, no one does. No one does. And if you have Biblical ones and you were raised in a non-biblical community it's because the grace of God and the transformative power of the Holy Spirit. It wasn't you. It wasn't me.

The Bible describes us as stones that are being fitted together to live in close proximity to one another, to bump against each other. "I don't like the way you did that or said that." And we work that out. Ironing that's sharpening the iron.

This poses a significant question to us, especially those of us young folks. Where do you find the people that you identify with? What path are you looking for? What path, what goal and what focus are you jumping into in culture, friends, work, school or whatever that you resonate at this level with? Solomon says, "Be careful about that." Be careful where you just jump in. Sometimes you'll become friends with the most unlikely people because you would not have picked them. We like the idea of just like, picking all of our friends, like "You will be my friend and you will be my friend and you." And it just doesn't work like that.

The Lord has mysterious ways of crossing our paths and destinies and overlapping in cities and all these things that's mysterious. Let your heart be open to who your friends will be. At a time in my life where I had very few friends and had lost almost all of them, the Lord sent me a friend that I would have never picked. I would have never picked this guy and the only similarity we had is that we both wanted Jesus. We wanted the Holy Spirit. We were completely different. I liked sports, he didn't. He liked building computers, I didn't. We were just very different people at that stage in our lives. And yet we became friends because we had a similar pursuit and we had that "Oh you too" moment. "Oh you actually want to pursue God in a deeper way that's beyond what's familiar and comfortable?"

Look at page 4, Christ is the truest friend. He's the truest friend because He meets and does all of these things with precision and accuracy and power. He is the friend that sticks closer than a brother because when your deficiencies are exposed He is the only guaranteed that's not going to abandon you. Your friends, your family, everyone else around you, if you're exposed for who you truly are, there's only one guaranteed to remain close and that is Him. Because He knows the worst about you which is the truth. He knows the truth about you and He goes, "I see the truth about my people." He goes, "I will not shrink back from them. I will pursue them. I will set my affection on them. He is the truest friend in that regard.

Not only that, but He is on a journey. I love this. And He invites us into the journey. He's like, "I'm the King. I'm the king of Israel. I'm the King of the Earth." He goes, "But I want you to come and rule and reign with me. We're going to Mt Zion. We're going to the hill of _____. We're going to Jerusalem. We're going to vindicate Israel. Come with me. Let's walk shoulder to shoulder." I love that, because He's God and He's in front of us but He is also shoulder to shoulder with us beckoning us on the journey with Him. He picks us up when we fall down. He encourages us when we want to quit and He goes, "We're going to do this thing together as friends."

You know, He didn't have to do that. Revelation 4 tells us that there's 24 thrones around His throne. He didn't have to have those other thrones there. He could just be like, "I am supreme God. No other thrones shall appear before me." But what does He do? He invites us into the deepest level of friendship that is unnecessary, unnecessary, reckless love. Shout out Corey Asbury. I love it.

As we journey with Christ we're headed to the final destination. I love what He says in John 20, verse 17 to Mary after His resurrection. He tells her, "Do not cling to me for I have not yet ascended to my Father but go to my brethren and say to them, "I am ascending to My Father." See and this is the friend part, "And your Father, to My God and your God." He didn't have to do that. He didn't have to say that. He goes, "I'm going somewhere but I'm bringing you with me on the journey. Let's be friends." How bizarre for Yahweh God of power and glory and beauty that the prophets feared and the nations trembled at to come down to the earth and look humanity in the face and not just say, "I love you. Hey we're family." But to look them in the face and say, "I just want to be friends with you. Actually, I set my affection on you. I long for you. I've put my heart upon you. I didn't have to. I wanted to. I wanted you with Me in my glory forever and ever."

Because Christ walked the road of friendship in all righteousness, He has the authority to define it. He alone has the authority to define friendship and relationship and, not just friendship, he has the authority to define love and what it actually means to truly love someone. Listen to how He says it, verse 13 in John 15, He says, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down his life for his friends." He's defining love. He's defining friendship. He's showing us what it means to truly be a friend and then He charges us. He says, "This I command you that you love one another. Don't just receive it from me but actually do it to one another. Love one another with this type of love, this type of love that doesn't quit, this fervent love that stretches out beyond what is comfortable, the love that covers a multitude of sin, love each other with that type of love."

Could it be that the most rare love back to Christ is friendship love? If we are to love God we could see Him and we could love Him for His appearance and I have not seen Him, but I will. And I could see Him and just love Him. My heart drawn to Him; my emotions be stirred because He is so beautiful. I could see Him. I could experience His power and salvation and forgiveness and the righteousness that comes through His cross. I could love Him because of that. I could be healed in my body and I have been healed supernaturally by the Lord. I could receive healing and love Him. But none of that is friendship. None of that is friendship love and I want to (I'm saying it softly) but I want to propose to us that maybe the highest form of love that we could express back to God would be to be His friend, to just love Him. To just love what He wants, to journey on the road, to get on the road with Christ and say, "What You're doing, I'm gonna do. Where You're going, I want to go. I don't get the whole pray for the salvation of Israel thing, but I'm Your friend and if You're going there, I'm going there and if You say love Israel, I'm gonna love Israel."

Jesus said in Matthew 9, verse 15, He said, " Can the friends of the Bridegroom mourn as long as the Bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the Bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast and mourn." Why? Because you're His friend. You want what He wants and when He's apart from you, your heart is torn. You want to walk shoulder to shoulder with Him. You want to do the things that He is doing and say the things that He's saying. He invites us to be friends of the Bridegroom. And I want to propose something to you. I want to propose to you that if the Lord has brought you to this community, one of the deepest more fundamental reasons that He brought you here, that He brought your family here is because He has called you to be a friend of the Bridegroom.

It's one of our core foundational messages, to be His friend, to simply be the friend of Christ, to walk shoulder to shoulder with Him, to set our affection on Him. You didn't have to come. Many of you came because of an invitation from the Lord, not of man. Most of the time that God leads His people through the prophetic, through the dreams, it's an invitation.

Friends invite. Masters demand. Friends call, and they beckon, and they invite, "Come, run with me. Do what I'm doing." That's the call of a friendship. Friends are constantly recruiting you to their different things that they're passionate about. And Christ, I want to almost bet that He called you here because He invited you into friendship at the deepest level with Him, to be a friend of the Bridegroom.

Now this is how John describes that in John, chapter 3, John the Baptist begins to describe this and he says, "I'm a friend of the Bridegroom. This is what it means to be my friend, to be a friend of the Bridegroom is to do what I'm doing." This is John talking, "He who has the bride is the Bridegroom (that's Jesus) but the friend of the Bridegroom (me) I stand and I hear and I rejoice greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice. I stand, and I hear, and I rejoice. I am all about what He is doing."

John's ministry went down south when Jesus appeared on the scene. We don't want that. We want friend of the Bridegroom to mean that everything in our life is successful. We have stronger families and better this and bigger that and more resources better work. We want all of

that stuff and may, the Lord, I just want to put it out there, maybe He invited you here because He goes, "I want you to come to the wilderness. I want you to be My friend. Will you love me when the chips are down? Will you love Me when it doesn't make sense? Will you leave all the other stuff?" Will you sacrifice and just show up because this love, this is an everlasting love. The principalities and powers look down at that love and they scratch their heads and they go, "No one loves God like that." When there's sacrifice involved. When it's Abraham taking his own promises and putting them on the altar, many of you have taken promises, you're put them on the altar, you've got the knife and you're like "I'm ready to do anything because You are my friend and if You say it, I'll do it." You're willing to go the distance. You've paid the price. You've come, enter in, friends of the Bridegroom, friends with Him.

John says this, (I'll invite the worship team out, Breton and the team) in verse 30 he says this, I must increase, or he must, excuse me, whew, blasphemy. He, Jesus, must increase, Jesus must increase. I must decrease. See friendship love has a vision to decrease. Friendship love talk about their friends to other people, not about themselves. You came here. You moved here to Kansas City, you joined Forerunner Church and this wild spiritual family, you're here. Do you have a vision to decrease?

If being a friend of the Bridegroom means you decrease and He increases, is it worth it to you? Is that enough?

Lord we just ask that You would send Your Spirit upon this people in a deeper way. We ask, Lord, that You would raise up friends of the Bridegroom, that our children would be friends of the Bridegroom, that they would have a vision of giving all, go to the wilderness, I'll do whatever's necessary, I've got to have you, I've got to know You in the deepest way.

And the path that this spiritual family is on, you've come, you've joined the path that we're on is this: It's one of the main paths we're on, be a friend of the Bridegroom. Decrease so that He could increase. Lay aside the other opportunities so that He would increase. Lay aside relationships, lay aside lesser loves, lay aside where you came from and your ideas and your dreams and hopes, just lay it aside. And just let Him increase and just let Him do it and let Him pay the bills and take care of the business and love the kids and we're here for Him. We're here for Him.

Lord raise up friends of the Bridegroom. Lord show us the path that we're on individually so that we could link arms with others and go into the things of You. This is where we're going, our friendship groups, we're not just about make friends for everyone, we can't guarantee that. I can't make you be friends. I can't make someone be your friend. You can't do the same for me. But if we get around each other and hang out in a living room and have some fellowship and pray for one another and walk together through life and experience victories and defeats together, we might find that there's a lot of similarities there, that we actually came for the same thing. We want God. We want Him. If He shows up in this room, I'm gonna grab Him and not let Him go. He's gonna have to de-socket my hip or whatever that thing was. You know. And I know that you're the same way. This people has a tenacity in their spirit in the things of God. Come and find the path that you're on. Come and join this family. Join where we're going together. Join

us. And if you don't feel that you can do that, that's okay. There's lots of other streams and paths and things going on in this city, all across, it's awesome. Go do it. Bless you.

Let's stand.