

# Befriending! Be Friending?

Love Your Neighbor – Week 2

March 29, 2020

## **DAY 1: CARE. Make a call; send a text.**

1. Almost five hundred years ago the great theologian Martin Luther faced the plague in Wittenberg, in 1527. He wrote a letter to Rev. Dr. John Hess. Here is an excerpt:

“You ought to think this way: Very well, by God’s decree the enemy has sent us poison and deadly offal. Therefore I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine, and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance infect and pollute others, and so cause their death as a result of my negligence.

“If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbor needs me, however, I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely, as stated above. See, this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God.”

(Luther’s Works, v. 43, p. 132, “Whether one may flee from a deadly plague” letter written to Rev. Dr. John Hess)

*Proverbs 17:17 A friend loves at all times and a brother is born for adversity.*

2. According to Solomon, how are we to think about friendship?

3. Martin Luther also said, “God does not need your good works but your neighbor does.”

4. We are not just the hands and feet of Jesus. We are also the eyes, ears, and lips of Jesus.

*Proverbs 18:24 A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.*

5. In 1876 Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone. 144 years later, that device is in the hands of several billion people. It is likely in your hands!

6. Friendship can be expressed by text or phone call. Who is someone you can call to communicate your care?

## DAY 2: DARE: Take the initiative

1. While “everyone” is “willing to give the shirt off their back,” how many actually do *anything*?
2. My mother used to tell me, “*Seth, the road to hell is paved with good intentions.*”
3. It’s easy to be a “legend in your own mind” when the standard of comparison is not action but merely intentions.

*Proverbs 20:6 Many a man claims to have unfailing love, but a faithful man who can find?*

4. Those who “claim” to have “unfailing love” are a dime a dozen!
5. The last part of Prov. 20:6 is a rhetorical question? What is Solomon inferring in that question?
6. Someone who is faithful is someone who is dependable. Their faithfulness does not depend on anything except their own character.
7. Nothing gets done until someone takes the initiative!

8. What stops initiative?

\_\_\_ Not caring? Curved in on yourself?

\_\_\_ “But what I can do is so small.”

\_\_\_ Excuses?

9. The opposite of initiative is the sluggard.

*Proverbs 22:13 The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside!" or, "I will be murdered in the streets!"*

10. What do you think is driving the sluggard? Fear? Something else?

11. Our model of initiative is Jesus. He not only came to earth, but came to you!

*Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*

12. The apostle John gives us our marching orders:

*1 John 3:18 Let us not only love in speech and tongue but in action and in truth.*

### DAY 3: WELFARE: Listening and understanding

1. Because we are made in the image of God we are *created for relationship*.

2. But because of our fallen nature, relationships can be damaged quite easily. Sometimes we are:

\_\_\_ More concerned about ourselves than another,

\_\_\_ Too eager to tell our story or give our opinion

\_\_\_ Eager to jump to say whatever comes to our mind

\_\_\_ Listening to someone else can be boring or too much work

3. But connection with people doesn't occur unless someone is listening and takes an interest in hearing what is said, what is felt, what is meant, or what is understood.

4. In the following verses, jot down what strikes you about how care is communicated by FIRST what we hear and SECOND by what we say:

*James 1:19 Let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to become angry.*

*Proverbs 18:2 A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions.*

*Proverbs 18:13 (RSV) If one gives answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.*

*Proverbs 15:28 (RSV) The mind of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.*

5. What strikes you from these verses?

6. Is there someone that needs your ear and heart?

## DAY 4: PRAYER

1. The early church exploded in Jerusalem. Three thousand people were saved on the Day of Pentecost!

2. What would they do? How would they organize? What was important to them?

*Acts 2:42 (RSV) And **they devoted themselves** to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread **and the prayers.***

<sup>43</sup> *And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.*

<sup>44</sup> *And all who believed were together and had all things in common;*

<sup>45</sup> *and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need.*

<sup>46</sup> *And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts,*

<sup>47</sup> *praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

3. People may not believe that prayer is important when life is going swell, but when stress and troubles hit prayer “becomes” much more important to people.

4. During the corona virus the anxiety and stress of the average person is sky-rocketing. Consider the reasons:

\_\_\_ Health: Will I get the virus?

\_\_\_ Health: Will my loved ones get the virus?

\_\_\_ Work: Will I still have a job? Will I get laid off?

\_\_\_ Finances: Will we be able to meet our budget?

\_\_\_ Finances: Will we lose our rent? House?

\_\_\_ Isolation: What kind of pressure is this putting on marriages?

\_\_\_ Isolation: Are your friends dealing with loneliness? Depression?

5. People tend to hide their greatest fears. When a person hides their stress and fears inside, stress and fears grow. On the other hand, when stresses and fears are shared they are *shared!*

6. People cannot be forced to open their hearts and share their stress and fears, but we can at least give people the opportunity. How? Through a simple question of care.

“My wife and I would like to pray for our neighbors.  
Is there something important to you for which we could pray?”

7. Is there someone you know that you could ask if they would like some prayer?

## **DAY 5: SHARE: Jesus call us His friends!**

1. This week we've looked at ways we can be the hands and feet, the eyes, ears and lips of Jesus. In short, we've looked at ways we can be *friends*!

2. Jesus was accused of being *friends* with the wrong kind of people.

*Matthew 11:19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and 'sinners'."*

3. This kind of criticism can be worn like a badge of honor!

4. To Jesus, the word "friend" had a distinct and honorable meaning!

*John 15:15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.*

5. What does Jesus consider someone He calls "friend?"

6. Whatever steps you've been encouraged to take to be a friend, consider the standard Jesus instructed!

*John 15:13 Greater love has no man than this that one lay down his life for his friends.*

7. Let's review our week:

Care: Make a phone call or a text

Dare: Take the initiative.

Welfare: Listen and seek to understand the people around you.

Prayer: Ask someone if you can pray for them and their family.

Share: Be a friend.