

What was Jesus like as a friend?

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn back together to John chapter 15 and we'll read again verse 15. Jesus said, No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends. For all that I've heard from my Father, I have made known to you. Now, tonight I want to do something a wee bit different because usually when we come together on a large day service on a Thursday evening, we will focus on a specific text. So it might be one verse, it might be a few verses, or it might be on a whole chapter.

And that, of course, is a vital thing to do. We want to come and study God's word and dig out the amazing riches that are present on every page. But we tend to focus on one part in particular. Tonight I want us to do something a wee bit different because it's important not just to look at specific parts of the Bible, it's also important to look at larger sections as a whole, to look at books of the Bible as a whole, and to look at the Bible itself as a whole, and to see what it's teaching us about a particular issue or theme. So when you're reading the Bible, you can find yourself, sometimes you'll focus right in on a section, maybe just even read one verse and try and write the truths of that verse onto your heart. That's a vital thing to do. But at the same time, it's always a really good thing to read through a bigger section of the Bible, maybe to read through a whole book, and to ask yourself, what is this book teaching me about a particular issue? So for example, you might read the book of Ruth and ask yourself the question, what is this teaching me about how I should treat the poor? You might read the letter of James and ask yourself, what is this teaching me about the way I speak? You might read 1st and 2nd Corinthians and ask, what is this teaching us about how we should deal with Christians when they sin and make mistakes?

The whole Bible is breathed out by God. That means that every single word counts, but it also means that every theme counts as well. And we want to be shaped by the Bible in this area as well. So that's what I want to do tonight. Instead of focusing in just on John chapter 15, I want us to look at the whole of John's Gospel. And I want us to ask a particular question. What was Jesus like as a friend? Now questions like that are really, really important because we all want to be Christlike as Christians. That's the goal of discipleship to become more like Jesus. That's what the process of sanctification is doing. We are being conformed more and more into the image of God's Son. We want to be Christlike, but if we are going to be Christlike, we need to know what Christ was like. And that applies in every area of behavior. And tonight we're going to just focus on one particular area, the issue of friendship. Now we could have of course looked at one of the other Gospels, but so that's something that you could do. You could read the other Gospels and ask the same question. Tonight we're just focusing on John because, well, if I'd gone for all four Gospels that I've had you here till nine o'clock at night. The great goal is that if we can see what Jesus is like as a friend, then by God's grace, it's going to shape how we are as friends to one another as well. So that's our big question tonight. What was Jesus like as a friend?

We're going to go through the whole of John's Gospel and there's 21 chapters. We won't go to every chapter, but we'll just pick out key moments from various chapters, but more or less working from the start to the finish. And we're going to say 10 brief things and they will be brief. So don't worry, brief things, but 10 things. So first of all, what do we learn about the kind of friend that Jesus was? Well, first of all, Jesus makes friends with people. That can seem like a very obvious thing, but it's a very strong emphasis in the Gospel of John, particularly in the early chapters where there is a big emphasis on personal contact between Jesus and various individuals. So in chapter one, Jesus meets Andrew and Peter and Philip and Nathaniel and a friendship begins between Jesus and his disciples. In chapter three, Jesus interacts with Nicodemus, who later on defends Jesus in chapter seven to his fellow Pharisees and he helped Joseph of Arimathea to put Jesus in the tomb at the crucifixion. Chapter four, we have this amazing incident of Jesus speaking to the woman at

the well and there Jesus makes friends with someone whose life was a mess and someone who was a social outcast. Again and again in John's Gospel, we see that Jesus speaks to people and he makes friends with people and that's reminding us that Jesus was not aloof. He was not unapproachable or distant or cold. He was friendly. Jesus was friendly. Now that might all seem to be very basic and obvious, but it's pointing us towards a really important theological point. It's telling us and reminding us that interpersonal friendship is both a divine and a human quality. It's a divine quality in that God himself, in his unique, indivisible, single nature, he exists as three persons, father, son and spirit and each of these relate to one another in a personal way. So the one [6:19] God, the one natured God is three persons and there is interpersonal relationship there. So the father and the son and the spirit talk together. The father, the son and the spirit rejoice together.

The father, the son and the spirit share a common will. The father, the son and the spirit exist together in a beautiful, loving friendship. So it should be absolutely no surprise to us that Jesus, the one in whom we see the glory of God is friendly because friendship is a divine quality. That's a really important thing to remember because we must never think that God is some kind of brutal deity like those of pagan mythology. God is gentle. God is compassionate. God is friendly. So friendship is a divine quality. So we see it in Jesus. But friendship is also a human quality. From the very beginning, God said, it's not good for man to be alone. And Eve was created to be a companion for Adam. That of course is reminding us of many things. One thing in particular is reminding us of is the fact that friendship is an absolutely foundational principle in marriage. Always remember that if you're looking for a spouse, friendship is far, far more important than looks or physical attraction or anything like that. Friendship is a foundational principle in marriage. But more widely, God has created the whole human race to be friends to one another. And so Jesus as the model of the perfect, sinless human part of his example is the fact that he makes friends with people. It's part of what God has always wanted for the human race. And so the fact that Jesus was making friends with people was not just a nice thing for him to do. It is grounded on the theological fact that he is truly God and truly man. There's a theological principle behind Jesus's friendliness. But alongside that, alongside that, there's also a really important ecclesiastical principle. Now ecclesiastical, that means the church to do with the church. There's a lesson for the church, a principle regarding the church here. Because in calling Jesus as disciples, as he does at the start of this Gospel at the end of chapter one, Jesus was inaugurating the new Israel. That's why there's 12 disciples corresponding to 12 tribes. This is the era when all the Old [9:04] Testament promises are being fulfilled. All that the Old Testament was a shadow of is now becoming a reality. So Jesus is establishing the new Israel, the true Israel, the people of God that was going to grow into what we now call the church. And so notice a really important point.

What did Jesus do to draw people into the church? Did he interview them? Did he make them go forward?

Did he test them? No. He made friends with them. And the vital point is that we must be ready to do the same. As we want to reach out to the community and draw people into the church, we need to make friends with people. Because to be Christ-like is to be ready to make friends.

Secondly, we see that Jesus spent time with his friends. That's another really important emphasis in John's Gospel. Jesus spent time with his friends and not just in terms of doing official kingdom duties. In chapter two, we read of Jesus and his friends going to a wedding in Cana. In chapter 12, we read of Jesus having dinner in Bethany with his friends. And so for Jesus of friendship was never something nominal and it was never something official. He devoted time to being with his friends. In other words, he was sociable and he clearly enjoyed being in other people's company. Now some people have often maybe said over the years that there's no record of Jesus laughing. Therefore, we shouldn't laugh. But I don't think that's really a very strong argument because there's a lot of things that there's no record of Jesus doing. Lots of areas of human life. I'll let you use your own imagination. But there's lots of things that

Jesus didn't do. There's no record of Jesus shaving. But I shaved today. I'm sure many of you did as well. So we have to be careful with these arguments from negativity. Jesus clearly enjoyed being his friends. And my own personal view, I'm not imposing this on anybody, but my personal view is that Jesus would of course have laughed with his friends in exactly the same way that he would have wept with his friends. And all of this is reminding us that as a Christian, or if you become a Christian, your company is precious to Jesus. Isn't that amazing? These people who were

nobody's, Jesus valued their company and Jesus values your company. That's a really important thing to remember in terms of our personal prayer lives. That's an area that everybody struggles in. [12:16] Every Christian finds that hard. It's not easy to make time to pray. We can get distracted. We can make excuses often. We just look at our prayer lives and we feel like absolute failure. But one of the keys to boosting your prayer life is to remember that Jesus loves your company. He wants to spend time with you. He wants to hear your voice. He wants to spend eternity with you. And so every time you stop and pray to him, you are making him happy. But this is also teaching us a really important lesson about our day to day lives as Christians. And this is something that is really important, I think, for us today, because we can often make a terrible mistake, whereby we separate our church lives and our social lives. And so we put these two things into two compartments in our lives. So on Sundays, we go to church with one group of people. And then during the rest of the week, if we want to have fun, if we want to socialize, if we want to chat about things, if we want to do some kind of activity, we go to another group of people. Now that should not be the case. Now when I say that, I am not saying that it's wrong to have friends outside the church. It's vital to have friends outside the church. That's part of our witness. What I am saying is that there is something major wrong if you don't have friends in the church. Because we should be a source of great friendship to one another. Because here you have these 12 disciples, they were the foundational basis for the New Testament church. And at the very same time, they were Jesus' friends. They had these two roles together. And so Jesus never separated his church life from his social life.

He didn't have disciples whom he did church stuff with, and then another 12 disciples who he did friendship stuff with. It was the same group. And we must not separate church life and social life. We must keep these things together. And so it's vital that we are not just a church who worships together on a Sunday, but we need to be a church that spends time together as friends. So for example, I'm just going to say this, on a Sunday, let's not just spend an hour together in the morning and an hour together in the evening. Let's do more together. Let's invite each other for lunch. Let's go to the beach together in the afternoon if it's a nice day. Let's sit and chat in their gardens if the weather is warm or let's sit by the fire and have a coffee together if the weather is not so nice. Let's make time as friends because that's what Jesus did. And if Jesus did it, we should do it. To be Christlike is to be ready to make time for one another.

Number three, Jesus maintains friendships. If we move on through the Gospel of John, we come to chapter 11, which is a remarkable chapter for teaching us about the kind of friend that Jesus was. And there's two points that arise from this chapter. The first is that it's clear from this chapter that a lasting friendship has been built up between Jesus and Mary, Martha and Lazarus. So much so that when Lazarus became sick, even though Jesus was absent from Bethany, which was where they lived, they sent a message to Jesus saying, Lord, he whom you love is ill. Lazarus was sick. He was on his deathbed. And that clearly shows us that Jesus had built up a friendship with these people, with this family, and he had maintained that friendship even though he was not always near them. And so he wasn't always in Bethany, but he maintained the friendship. It's a great, great reminder of the faithfulness of Jesus.

[16:39] And here it shows us that Jesus is not just faithful in his duties. Jesus is not just faithful as a teacher, not just faithful as a leader. He's not just faithful as a king. He is faithful as a friend.

The ongoing relationship between Jesus and Mary, Martha and Lazarus was maintained. Jesus's status never made him too important for his friends. So in their time of need, these two sisters are able to send a message to Jesus, not because they're important, not because Jesus is under some obligation to them, but simply because Jesus is their friend and the one who Jesus loves is sick. And it's a great reminder that Jesus doesn't move from one friend to another, to another, to another. He's not fickle. He's faithful. And that is a great reassurance to us. It's reminding us of the amazing commitment that Jesus has towards us, that we can come to him at any time, no matter what, because he is our friend. It's a great reassurance to us, but it's also a great challenge because it's very easy to neglect friendships and it's very easy to move on from one to another. Often people in the world, especially in school days, somebody can be your friend one day and then they barely want to know you the next. I remember that from school and I'm sure it's something that you've all experienced. As disciples, we want to be different. To be Christ-like is to maintain friendships. Fourthly, and still in John chapter 11, we see that Jesus wept with his friends.

That's one of the most powerful displays of emotion that Jesus showed and it is all in relation to a friend. John 11:32, when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet saying, Lord, if you'd been here, my brother would not have died. When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who'd come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled and he said, where have you laid him? They said to him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept.

Jesus shares the sorrow of his friends, Mary and Martha. He mourns the death of a friend himself and we see that there's this remarkable depth of emotional connection between Jesus and his friends. And the amazing thing is that if that was true for Mary and Martha, it's also true for you as a Christian or if you become one. It's very, very easy to think that when we are struggling or going through hard times, God's not going to care. Jesus isn't going to be that interested if we are hurting. It's so easy to think like that, but the truth is that he cares for you with a depth of commitment and tenderness and compassion that is far, far, far greater than we will ever realize.

And all of this is reminding us that as Christians, we must be ready for our friendships in this church to go much deeper than just cheerfully greeting each other once a week with a quick hi-how. Are you nice to see you? We want to be ready to weep together. That of course means opening ourselves up to one another and nurturing a deep sense of concern for each other's welfare, because as friends we share joys, but we also share sorrows. And as you struggle, and if you are going through a difficult time, we want to be here for you as Christian friends. We face these trials together. To be Christlike is to be ready to weep together. Fifthly, Jesus serves his friends.

[21:04] This is the passage that we read at the very beginning of the service from John chapter 13. I don't need to read it again. It's when Jesus ate with his disciples and afterwards he washed the disciples feet. And here Jesus displays extraordinary humility. He's willing to put his friends' needs first, even to the point of doing the menial task that's usually reserved only for a servant, because Jesus' great desire is to serve his friends. In other words, Jesus' priority is not what these friends can do for him. It's what he can do for them. And that's a crucial part of Christian friendship. So often we are friends with people who make us feel good.

So often we're friends with people with whom we get on well. And therefore we benefit from the friendship. There's people that we spend time with and it makes us feel so good and it enriches us and helps us. And that's a great thing. But Christ's example is showing us that godly friendship is not just about what we get. In fact, it is not primarily about what we get.

It's about what we can give and what we can do for others. And that is why Christian friendship is not based on whether or not you've got the right personality or the right reputation or the right possessions or the right charisma or anything like that. Our friendship is based on something far better. It's based on the fact that we are united in Christ. And that is the firmest foundation for a friendship. You know, it's really, really interesting. I don't know if I should say this, but I'm going to say it anyway. I find that there was loads of people, well maybe not loads, but quite a few people who spoke to me after I became a minister, who when I was just an engineer didn't really want to know me. Is that right? Of course it's not. Because I don't want people to be my friend because I'm a minister. I want people to be my friend because we are united in

Christ and we are all equal as brothers and sisters. That is the grounding of friendship. Christian friendship is not putting yourself up there as somebody who's kind of got life sorted.

Christian friendship is about being ready to be humble because Jesus was ready to be humble. He was ready and willing to serve his friends. To be Christlike is to be ready to serve each other.

[24:00] Jesus served his friends. Number six, Jesus warns his friends. Jesus of course was sinless, one of the many amazing things about him. That means though, that as a friend, Jesus could never, ever be anything other than honest. Isn't that an interesting thought? Imagine that. Imagine a friend who could not be anything other than honest. Jesus was sinless and as Isaiah 53 says, there was no deceit found in his mouth. So whenever he spoke to his friends, he could and would not be anything that was in any way deceptive. He was always honest. And part of the outworking of that involved warning his friends. An example of that is at the end of John 13, we see two warnings. Jesus warns his disciples that he's going to be betrayed. And then he warns Peter and says to him, will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times. It's of course reminding us that Jesus did not simply tell his disciples what they wanted to hear. In fact, very often Jesus was saying things to them that they didn't want to hear, but it was what they needed. And that's one of the things, the wonderful things about God. He'll always be honest with us, telling us everything that we need to know. That's why

God warns us that we are lost without Jesus. And he warns us that as Christians, if we follow a particular path of sin, it's going to lead to trouble and sorrow and difficulty.

He will rebuke us and discipline us out of his fatherly love. It's not to be horrible to us, it's to warn us and to call us out of a desperate situation. God warns us because he cares about us.

That was one of the many wonderful things about the kind of friend that Jesus was. But of course, this is where it gets a bit more challenging for us, because in terms of our friendships to one another, this is still a model of what we should be. And so we have to ask, do we love each other enough to warn each other about things? That's a vital part of friendship.

And it's a vital part of caring for one another as a church family. Now, that always, now I'm underlining the word always, has to be done in gentleness. Never, ever, ever think that giving a warning is an excuse to be harsh. All of these things must be done in gentleness. We are never to rebuke or warn in a judgmental, cold or arrogant way. That is just to deal with sin by sinning in another way. But we must be ready to watch out for each other. We must be willing to warn each other. And we must of course be ready to receive warnings from one another. And of course, if the warnings are gentle, then it's going to build the friendship, not damage it. So there's lots of examples we could think of. So supposing somebody is getting too engrossed in social media, maybe there's a friend who needs, maybe they need a warning from their friend. Maybe somebody's habit of social drinking is just getting a wee bit risky. Maybe there's a warning that needs to be given there. Maybe somebody is unwilling to forgive because of some circumstances. Maybe we need to be ready to give a warning there. Now, when I say that, another really important point is that before you ever give somebody a warning, you must make sure first of all that they're okay. Because there might be a whole host of other circumstances lying behind their actions that you don't know about. And it's so easy for us to think, oh, that person's doing that. I need to tell them to do that and that thing, then it'll be fixed. Not realizing that there is a massive web of complexity behind everybody's lives. And so always be ready to check that somebody's okay or to try and just find out what's going on. But in love, when the need arises, we need to be ready to warn each other. And that of course means that you can warn me about things that you might see in me that I don't see in myself. Because to be Christlike is to be ready to warn each other.

[28 : 56] Now we come to John chapter 15. And we come to the seventh thing. Jesus shares things with his friends. That's the text that we've taken in many ways summarizing what we've been saying. No longer do I call you servants for the servant does not know what his master is doing. But I've called you friends for all that I've heard from my father. I have made known to you. Here we see a really interesting point that communication lies at the heart of friendship. We must never ever forget that Jesus is a communicator. He's the greatest communicator of all of history, because he is the one who reveals God to us and communicates the fullness of God to us in a way like nothing else. That's part of what John means when he calls Jesus the word right at the very beginning of this gospel. That's the Greek word *logos*. Behind that lies the idea of the fact that God that Jesus is the one through whom God is communicated to us through whom we see God through whom God is revealed. The fullness of God Almighty is being shown to us in the Person of Jesus Christ. And so just think about that.

Jesus wants to share things with you. In other words, Jesus, there's things that Jesus wants to tell you.

There's things that he wants you to know. You individually, you personally, there's things that Jesus wants to share with you. He wants to share his plans with you. Why? So that you can be part of them as well. He wants you to know his commandments so that you can honor God the Father just as he did. He wants you to hear his warnings so that you will be kept from danger and harm.

He wants to give you his promises so that you might have hope in the midst of darkness. He wants to share his teaching with you so that you can be filled with all the wonder of the knowledge of God just as Jesus is. He knows the Father and he makes him known to us. And above all, Jesus wants to share his love with you. So that just as the Father has loved him, so he will love you. And that means that the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords is your friend. If you are trusting in Jesus, he wants to share himself with you. And of course, that's a model for us to follow whereby we share our lives together. To be Christlike is to be ready to share things together.

That was number seven, so we have three more to go. Number eight brings us into John chapter 19. Jesus trusted his friends. John chapter 19 verse 26 is right in the middle of Jesus suffering on the cross. And in the midst of all that agony, in the midst of all that pain, in the midst of everything

that's going on, we see Jesus doing something amazing with one of his friends.

[32 : 13] When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, woman, behold your son. Then he said to the disciple, behold your mother. And from that hour, the disciple took her to his own home. Now that's absolutely remarkable because there in the midst of the suffering of the cross, Jesus entrusts his mother to his friend. The disciple who Jesus loved is referring to John, who the author of this gospel. And it's reminding us of another wonderful aspect of godly friendship. We want to be ready to trust one another with the things that really matter. Just think about it. If Jesus needed the help of a friend to look after something precious, then so do we. And so as friends, we want and need to be ready to trust each other. We need to ensure that we are careful when something isn't trusted to one another so that we never ever let each other down. That's why integrity is at the heart of Christian living. As disciples, we are not one thing to one person and another thing to another. We will not say one thing one minute and say a different thing behind the person's back. We must be absolutely integrated, consistent people so that what we say, what we think, what we are is all corresponding and to the glory of God. And so if we are entrusted with someone's property, we treat it like our own and we are models of care.

If we are entrusted with somebody's money, maybe at work, you might be entrusted with somebody's money. You might be entrusted with lots of money. You want to do that in a way that honors God. If you are entrusted with information, now that's the one that really tests us. When you're entrusted with information about something, we must be men and women of absolute integrity because information that is mishandled quickly becomes gossip. We want to be careful. We want to be Christlike. To be Christlike is to be ready to trust each other. Number nine, Jesus reassures his friends. That brings us into chapter 20 where we find the famous incident often as he's known, doubting Thomas, who I suppose I've always had an affinity with because when I was growing up I didn't know many Thomas's apart from doubting Thomas in the Bible. I'm sure you know what happened. Jesus had appeared to the disciples one week but Thomas wasn't there and so he didn't believe them. He questioned what had happened and he said, unless I see it for myself, I'm not going to believe it. And so the following week

Jesus appears again and this time Thomas is present and he marvelously helps to reassure him. He says to Thomas, put your finger in here and see my hands. Put out your hand and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve but believe. And so Jesus reassures Thomas with his struggles. This raises a really interesting question. Do Christians doubt? Well the answer to that question is yes, of course they do. But perhaps the even more important question is do we feel we can talk about that? Do we feel we can talk about our doubts? Do we feel that we could be open about these struggles or questions that we may have? Well here Jesus is giving us a wonderful example because he is reassuring a friend who has got doubts. He's helping him. And another important point is that one of the reasons, probably the main reason why Thomas doubted was because the week before he wasn't with the disciples. And it's a very very clear reminder of the fact that if we isolate ourselves, if we don't spend time together as friends, as Christians, as brothers and sisters together, we will very often leave ourselves exposed to the danger of doubts growing and of challenges arising. God is calling us to be together because we need each other and because we need to be supported. Thomas came back in to the fellowship of the church and he found glorious comfort and reassurance. And so Jesus is a wonderful example. He didn't rebuke Thomas. He reassured him and as friends in Christ we need to be doing the same for each other. Reassuring each other, helping one another, encouraging one another. To be Christlike is to be ready to reassure each other. Now this brings us to number 10 but I'll quickly recap so that we've got them all. Number one, Jesus makes friends with people. Number two, Jesus spends time with his friends. Number three, Jesus maintains friendships. Number four, Jesus wept with his friends. Number five, Jesus serves his friends.

[38 : 19] Number six, Jesus warns his friends. Number seven, Jesus shares things with his friends. Number eight, Jesus trusted his friends. Number nine, Jesus reassures his friends. And that brings us to the last chapter of John and here we see in Jesus one of the most amazing acts of friendship of them all because here Jesus restores his friend. Remember back in chapter 18, well back in chapter 13, Jesus had warned Peter that he would deny him. In chapter 18, despite Peter saying he would never do it, he did it. He denied his friendship with Jesus three times and we know from the other Gospels that his response when he realized what he had done was to go and to weep bitterly. But then in John chapter 21, Jesus takes Peter aside and he restores their friendship.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon son of John, do you love me more than these? He said to him, yes, Lord, you know that I love you. He said to him, feed my lambs.

And of course, he asked him the question three times, clearly undoing each of the denials that Peter made. It is an amazing act of forgiveness and of healing. You think of everything that Jesus could have said to Peter at that moment. He could have said to him, I told you so. I told you that you would do it. He could have said to him, how could you? How could you have denied me at that moment? He could have said to him, I will never, ever forget what you've done. That's the kind of things that we say, isn't it? That's the kind of thing that the world says. But Jesus is so gloriously different from the world. He takes his friend Peter and he puts everything right again.

And notice who initiates the reconciliation. It's not Peter. It's Jesus. And that's the example that we need to follow. And so if there's ever friendships in our congregation or across the two congregations that need to be restored, we need to follow Jesus's example. If there's ever things that we need to say sorry for, we need to be ready to say sorry. And if anything does arise in the future where tension grows for whatever reason, we must remember the kind of friend that Jesus was to Peter. He restored their friendship. To be Christlike is to be ready to forgive each other.

[41 : 32] So that's our brief survey of the Gospel of John asking the question, what was Jesus like as a friend?

And I find myself, I can't help thinking about that, him that I'm sure we all sang when we were we, what a friend we have in Jesus. So true. He's an amazing, amazing friend. So much so that he laid down his life for his friends. Jesus is the perfect friend. And do you know, please if you are seeking the Lord or not yet you're a Christian, please just know that Jesus wants you as his friend. He wants you as his friend. And he wants, it's just as simple as that, just don't make it any more complicated than that. Jesus wants you as his friend. And he will help you every step of the way. Jesus is a remarkable friend. And so we say what a friend we have in Jesus.

But of course, that means that if we are Christlike, then we will also be able to say what friends we have in one another. And that is an incredibly powerful witness to the world around us.

And God and His mercy make us that kind of church. Let's pray. God our Father, we thank you for Jesus and for the perfect model of friendship that we see in him. It's just amazing to see all these aspects and we know we've only just scratched the surface. But we thank you for that extraordinary privilege of being able to be your friends. We thank you for that so much. And we just pray, oh God, that we too would be Christlike in every way. And that we would be ready to put aside our own preferences or prejudices or insecurities. And so that we'd be able to follow the example of Jesus. And we really do pray that our example of friendship to one another would be so great that people would see us and glorify you and be drawn to come and seek the God that we serve and love. May that not be in any way about making a reputation for ourselves, but for you, oh God, so that people would see the amazing, transforming power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We pray that in your mercy that you would make us that kind of church, that we would be friends in the way that Jesus is a friend. Amen.