



**To Be A F-R-I-E-N-D**  
**Acts 2:42-47**  
**Westport Christian Church**  
**May 16, 2010**

“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:42-47NASU)

A wife invited some people to dinner. At the table, she turned to their six-year-old daughter and said, 'Would you like to say the blessing?' 'I wouldn't know what to say,' the girl replied. 'Just say what you hear Mommy say,' the wife answered. The daughter bowed her head and said, 'Lord, why on earth did I invite all these people to dinner?'

Well, we know why we invited you, because you are our friend and we would like to thank you for coming and being part of our service today. Some wise person once said, "Be kind to your friends. Without them you'd be a complete stranger."

As most of you may know, Westport Christian Church is focusing on family ministry.

We are focusing on family ministry because the church is a family. Not only are we to be a family, we are to be friends! What makes a friend? A friend is someone that you have things in common with. Christians have a minimal of two things in common. Their faith in Christ and the common factor of seeing other people brought into the kingdom. In other words, new friends! I love being part of the wonderful fellowship of the body of Christ here in Westport. I love having friends in Christ that can offer the many things we need to walk in our faith.

In looking at our text, the church had begun on the day of Pentecost and the Lord was adding to His church daily those who were being saved. The Church began almost 2,000 years ago and it's time for the church to get back to its original intent and plan. Billy Graham was giving an interview one time and someone told him that he had set the church back 20 years. He said, "I'm sorry, it was my intent to set it back 2000 years." The church began with friends telling each other about the Lord. Today, I am so happy that you have brought with you today your friend so that we can share with them the wonderful work of the Lord. Today, I want to use the word friend to help us learn how to be a friend.

### I. F is for-Forgive

To be a friend we need to forgive those who offend you. When we are devoted to fellowship, you have to be a forgiving person. We all make mistakes and need forgiveness and understanding.

A true friend is someone who will forgive you no matter the circumstances. They look over your faults and past and are ready to show grace.

As Christians, we are commanded to be that kind of friend! The disciples went to Jesus and asked Him to teach them how to pray and this is what many call the Lord's prayer or model prayer, however, to many people want to stop and put in amen instead of including verses 14 and 15. In those two verses Jesus said, "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. "But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions." (Matt 6:14-15NASU)

Peter came to Jesus and asked the question, how many times should we forgive our brother. "Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." (Matt 18:21-22NASU)

Peter wanted to set a limit on when it was okay not to forgive, but Jesus said there is no such thing! We would like to set a limit on the number of times we had to forgive, but there is no such thing. There is a big misunderstanding as to what forgiveness is.

Forgiveness is not forgetting. Forgiveness is not saying what they did was right. Forgiveness is not trusting. Forgiveness IS releasing our right to retaliate. It is refusing

to cause hurt back to the person. Forgiving is saying we want to make this relationship the best it can be. Forgiveness is vital to any relationship!

## II. R-Restore.

Restore those who repent. The early church was a place where repentant people could find restoration. A person that is forgiving is also a person that actively works at restoring those that have repented from their transgressions. They yearn for their relationship with that person to be what it once was.

There are few ministries as important as the ministry of restoration. To restore means to bring something back to its original condition. When an old car is restored, it is brought back from rust and decay and given a new lease on life. This is what we are called to do to those that repent. We are part of what is called the Restoration Movement. The idea is that we want to reveal a renewed interest in the church, as it should be. We yearn for a church that is restored, brought back to its original condition and ministries. The early church was a loving place where a person could worship and find reconciliation, restoration with God and their fellow man. It's hard to imagine the early church turning away those in need of God's grace and not working towards restoring those who stumbled. It's hard to believe that a people so thankful for God's grace would fail to share that grace with others.

Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. (Gal 6:1-3NASU)

We need to be quick to try to restore those that stumble. Ministering to their needs in bringing them back to a restored relationship with the Lord and His church.

## III. I-Invite others to share in fellowship.

Those in the early church couldn't meet together enough and there is no doubt they were excited about what was happening in the church. What happens when someone gets excited? What happens when something great happens to you? You want to share it with others do you not? In the early church, people were telling everyone about the Lord. They were eager to share about the goodness of God and His salvation available to everyone who would seek Him out. It is only the Lord who can add to His Church, but He uses people like you and me to tell others about His amazing grace.

Some of you have shared with me you have invited people to come, but they haven't. To those of you I would like to say, don't get discouraged, keep inviting.

Some of you have shared with me the people that you can share the gospel with lives to far away for them to come here, tell them anyway. Now, this may sound strange to some of you but God's kingdom is bigger than this building! We need to be about telling

others and let God place them where they should be.

I talked to a man the other day that told me him and his wife drives 1hour one way to go worship. He drives by at least 100 places to worship to get where they go. Why, you may be asking yourself? The answer my friends is simply because someone invited them. And that person that invited them was excited about what God was doing in and through that body of believers!

I believe that every week should be friend's day! A friend invites and lets God do the rest.

#### IV. E-Encourage Others.

The early church was a place of encouragement! Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing. (1Thess 5:11NASU)

If we're not a place of encouragement, then we become of place of discouragement. God's word is clear; the church is to be a place of lifting up one another not tearing down and criticizing. Westport Christian Church must be known as a congregation that encourages people! We need to the lost to be saved! We need to encourage the saved so they will reach out to the lost! We need to encourage the preacher so he will preach the Word of God fearlessly. We need to be encouraging John when the youth don't come that he may not lose heart and zeal. We need to encourage those who teach that they may teach the truth. We need to encourage the lukewarm so that they will warm up and be productive for the Kingdom of God! We need to be a place of encouragement!

#### V. N-Nourish a team attitude.

The church must work together as a team. In our text it states they had all things in common. They had a common goal. They had a common calling. They had all this in common because they had a common Savior! Are we that church today? Are we the team we need to be?

In order to be the team we should be, we must understand that each and every one of us is under the Lordship of Jesus Christ! He and He alone is the Head of the Church, the Captain of the team!

#### VI. D-Dream bigger than the church building.

In order to be a friend of God and friends to others, we have to look beyond ourselves and beyond this building. While it's true that a portion of the body of Christ meets here each week, it's also true that this building isn't the focus of our Christianity. We have to think outside of the building because these four walls can not contain the God we come here to worship and neither should we try to confine Him here! It would be good to outgrow this building and to have a bigger one, but we are going to have to reach beyond this building to make it happen.

If you are content with where we are right now, then you aren't dreaming big enough. One reason people don't want to grow is they won't know everyone. Now, to me that's like telling God you don't want to be part of His Kingdom because you won't know everyone!

Now, don't get me wrong, it's not about building bigger buildings, but it is all about focusing on what God wants and not about what you or me want! It's all about reaching out to a lost world! The early church had a reaching attitude. They reached up to God, they reached in to their fellow brothers and sisters and they reached out to the world around them! Conclusion; We need to be a friend. Forgive others-Restore Others-Invite Others-Encourage Others-Nourish a team attitude-Dream big for God. In what the news called "The Miracle at Quecreek," nine miners trapped for three days 240 feet underground in a water-filled mine shaft "decided early on they were either going to live or die as a group." The 55 degree (Fahrenheit) water threatened to kill them slowly by hypothermia, so according to one news report "When one would get cold, the other eight would huddle around the person and warm that person, and when another person got cold, the favor was returned." "Everybody had strong moments," miner Harry B. Mayhugh told reporters after being released from Somerset Hospital in Somerset. "But any certain time maybe one guy got down, and then the rest pulled together. And then that guy would get back up, and maybe someone else would feel a little weaker, but it was a team effort. That's the only way it could have been." They faced incredibly hostile conditions together—and they all came out alive together. What a picture of the body of Christ. SOURCE: Bill White, Paramount, California; Citation: adapted from "Teamwork Helped Miners Survive Underground," CNN.com (7-28-02). What a picture of being a friend!

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