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**Key Texts:**

Mark 2:1-5, Proverbs 13:20, 27:17, 18:24, 17:17, 1 John 3:18-19

**Key Challenge:**

We should strive to be a friend who will bring people closer to Jesus, be there for our friends when they are hurting, and overcome adversity for our friends’ benefit.

We all want to be liked, right? We do some pretty weird stuff to seek out the affirmation of our friends, and even people we don’t know very well.

I think the strangest iteration of affirmation seeking is “TBH” or “like for a rate.” I understand that there are two things in play there: first, it’s an easy way to get likes. And we do tie our value up in social media affirmations sometimes, don’t we?

I know another thing that’s at play, for those that like those statuses, is we sometimes really want to know what people think of us.

Be honest: how many of you have ever posted a “Like for a rate” or a “TBH” status? Now, how many of you have ever liked one of those statuses from someone you really don’t know that well?

I will admit that these crack me up. I have seen so many responses that say something like, “TBH I don’t know you well, but … we go to the same school,” or, “you seem like a nice guy.” I’m never sure what the liking person was hoping for. “TBH, we’re not close, but I’ve been hoping we could become BFFs”? I don’t know. I think we all just want to have friends, and sometimes we go about it in silly ways.

We’re continuing our *Relationship Goals* series tonight. Last week, we talked about the importance of honoring our parents, regardless of whether they seem honorable to us. The command to us is to obey and honor, with no exception clauses.

Tonight, we are talking about what types of goals we should set for our friends, and for ourselves as godly friends. How many of you have had or do have really good friends? How many of you have had friends who have you down? I think we can get a pretty good idea of what kind of friend we ought to be through our experiences with our great friends, our not so great friends, and maybe some former friends.

[**Author Note:** Here, share about a good friend in your life who fits the definition of “friend.”]

When I hear the word “friend,” one person comes to my mind immediately. I have had the same best friend for 20 years now. He is a friend who has been there for me through difficult times, who has held me accountable when I wasn’t living the way I should be living, and with whom I have enjoyed countless inside jokes. Sometimes we text each other a single word, and the other responds predictably, and we both think it’s hilarious. I have more inside jokes with Josh than all other people combined, except my wife Sarah—who’s in on most of them, anyway. He’s just been a good friend to me.

I think it’s hard to measure how good a friend someone is until you’re in a difficult situation. I mean, when it really hits the fan, and you don’t know how you’re going to get through, but you know you’re getting through with that person by your side, you know you’ve got a good friend. That’s the kind of friend he is.

Sarah and I were 20 years old when we got in a major car accident. Josh was 19 years old. I remember a couple people complaining that he was there too much and made other people look like a bad friend. I thought that was insane, but it happened. It happened, because he was there every single day. He was in college and working, but he made it there every single day. He wasn’t trained in pastoral care, he wasn’t particularly grown up yet—neither was I—but he was there. He laughed with us, he cried with us, he sat silently with us, and he prayed with us. He was and is a great, godly friend.

When I think about what my goal is for the kind of friend I want to be, I think about Josh, and I think about a few nameless guys in the Bible. I want to look at their story in Mark 2:1–5. Go ahead and turn or touch-screen your way there.

**Mark 2:1–5 (NLT)**

*When Jesus returned to Capernaum several days later, the news spread quickly that he was back home. Soon the house where he was staying was so packed with visitors that there was no more room, even outside the door. While he was preaching God’s word to them, four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. They couldn’t bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, so they dug a hole through the roof above his head. Then they lowered the man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, “My child, your sins are forgiven.”*

I think we can learn three important friend goals from these four men. If I want to surround myself with godly friends, I am looking for someone who will do what these guys did. And more importantly, we see three things that we ought to be doing for others as godly friends.

The first thing we see is that a godly friend helps bring you closer to Jesus. In their case, it was both physical and spiritual. They brought a man to Jesus who physically could not get there on his own. But by bringing him into Jesus’ presence, they also were a catalyst to this man’s faith in Jesus and relationship beginning.

We should want friends who bring us closer to Jesus, people who hold us accountable, and people who encourage us in our walk. Let’s look at a couple verses in Proverbs.

**Proverbs 13:20**

*Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble.*

**Proverbs 27:17**

*As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.*

We should be associating with the wise—that is, the *spiritually* wise—as opposed to spending all of our time with fools. Not only are fools to be pitied, but they are to be avoided as primary influencers.

We also see that one role of a friend is to sharpen a friend and help him become more godly. We should be surrounding ourselves with friends who will help us in these ways.

We should also be that friend. We should be bringing our friends to Jesus. We should be bringing our non-Christian friends to Him, and we should be bringing our Christian friends closer. If we truly love our friends, we will stop at nothing to make sure they are walking with Jesus, because we know that is the very best thing for them.

The second thing we see in these four friends and that we should have as goals for ourselves and our friends that a godly friend is there for you when you are hurting.

We have to be this friend. I have had friends who have been there for me when I was hurting, but I have had other friends who never reached out to me in my most painful times. They knew I was hurting, and through their non-response, I knew they weren’t my good friends. That just adds hurt upon hurts. It’s salt on an already open wound. I do not want to be like that, because I have felt what it’s like to be on the receiving end of that type of friendship.

We always tell our friends that we are there for them, right? And our friends tell us the same. But talk is cheap.

**1 John 3:18–19**

*Dear children, let’s not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God.*

Talk is cheap! Don’t just say you’ll be there for someone. If your friend is hurting, show them you are there for them with your actions. Show them your love for them. Show up and sit with them, listen to them, and pray for and with them. Do something!

The last thing we see in these friends in Mark is that they overcame adversity. They did something. They brought their friend to Jesus, but they couldn’t get in. The place was packed. But they climbed on the house, tore open the roof, and lowered their paralyzed friend down to Jesus. They went to extreme lengths instead of just quitting. They could have said, “Well, we tried, but we can’t get in. Better luck next time, friend.” No! They overcame adversity.

We need those friends, and we need to be that friend. We should not be unreliable or unwilling to go to great lengths to show our love for our friends. Let’s look at two more verses.

**Proverbs 18:24 (NIV)**

*One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.*

**Proverbs 17:17**

*A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.*

We have a contrast here. Having unreliable friends doesn’t go well, but there are friends who will stick closer than a brother to you. Are you an unreliable friend who brings a friend’s life, their feelings, and their situations to ruin, or are you closer than a brother? Which friend do you want to be? In the second verse, we see that a true friend loves at all times, and in adversity a friend who sticks through it is like a brother.

What kind of friend are we? What should be our goal? I think we ought to be striving to bring our friends closer to Jesus, be there for our friends when they are hurting, and overcome adversity instead of quitting on them. Our friends may not always return the favor. They may not always step up in these ways, but we can’t control that. We can only control what we do and how we treat people. We should be like the four nameless friends in Mark 2. We do not know their names, but we know their love, because we see their actions.

Let’s pray.