

New Identity

Lesson 5

Friends

Reflections from Lesson 4

1 – Who is one seeker you are praying for at this time? How have you seen God working in their life to draw them to Jesus?

2 – What is one place you go where you desire to have an impact for Christ? What are you doing to establish contacts and relationships in this place? How can your group members encourage you in your efforts to be an ambassador?

The Big Picture

I had a boss once who was a real slave drive. He used to come right up to my face and with a very loud, booming voice say to me, “Who signs your check? Who? Who?” He sounds like an owl. And I would say, “You do.” And then he would say, “So if I asked you to stand on your head in the corner, what do I expect you to do?” I’d say, “Up, stand on my head in the corner.” He drove me crazy. He was no friend of mine. He was a taskmaster, a slave drive. Leaders like that drain the joy out of work and service. Taskmasters build walls between themselves and others. They rob workers of their dignity.

Jesus said to His followers, “I will never treat you like that. I may be your Commanding Officer, and you’re My soldiers, but I will never treat you like a slave owner or a taskmaster. My authority will always have a thread of friendship woven through it. I will respect you. I will treat you with dignity and love.”

In this session we’re looking at the place where Jesus announces one dimension of our new identities when He says, “I want you to all know that when I look at you as My followers, I see you as being My friends, My personal close, trusted friends.”

A Wide Angle View

- 1) What qualities do you look for in a good friend?
- 2) Describe one fond memory of an experience with a friend. (This could be recent or one from the past).

A Biblical Portrait

Read John 15:9-17

- 3) According to John, how does Jesus show His friendship to us?

How can we show our love and friendship to Jesus?

Sharpening the Focus

4) In the last few weeks how has Jesus demonstrated His love and friendship to you?

Read Snapshot “Increased Time Together”

Increased Time Together

If I were to ask you how you would improve a relationship with an earthly friend, some of you would readily provide some clear answers. You’ll find that some of the ways we improve our friendship with Jesus run on parallel paths to the ways we would improve earthly relationships. The first suggestion I want to make to you is an obvious one. Isn’t it generally understood that a sure way to improve a relationship is to increase the quantity and quality of time that the individuals spend together? The same is true in our friendship with Jesus.

5) What can you do to increase the quantity and quality of time you spend with Jesus?

Read Snapshot “Removing Barriers”

Removing Barriers

The second thing you can do to improve a relationship with a friend, or with Jesus, is to remove any barriers that obstruct the relationship. I suggest you do that through honest communication. Deep, intimate, earthly relationships don’t develop easily or automatically. Usually, as the friendship deepens there are some tough issues that must be faced. Situations arise that threaten the future of the relationship. Idiosyncrasies come to the surface and you say, “uh-oh, we’re going to have to get past this if this relationship is going to grow.” There can also be differences in values or opinions. Whatever forms they take, most relationships have barriers that need to be dealt with. In the same way, there are sins, attitudes, and issues that can become barriers between us and Jesus. We need to identify these and remove them.

6) What are some of the barriers that remain between you and Jesus? How can you removed them?

Read Snapshot “Serving Jesus”

Serving Jesus

A third way you can improve your relationship with a friend or with Jesus is to serve them. You know as strange or paradoxical as this sounds, the more you invest in a relationship, the more precious the relationship becomes to you. You might think that if someone serves you, they’ll become more precious to you. Well, it works the opposite way too. The more you serve somebody, the greater the investment you make in someone’s life, the more precious that person becomes to you. Jesus has deepened His relationship with you through service and care. You can deepen your side of the relationship through you service as well.

7) What are you doing in your life right now to serve Jesus?

How can you enlarge your “servant’s heart” toward Jesus?

Read Snapshot “Saying ‘I Love You!’”

“Saying ‘I Love You!’”

The fourth way you can improve a relationship with a friend – or with Jesus – is to affirm the importance of the relationship. As corny and antiquated as it sounds, verbal affirmation of the value of a relationship goes a long way in deepening the relationship itself. And, simply put, saying “I love you” helps deepen our relationship with Jesus. Say it often, say it in different ways, but be sure to tell Jesus you love Him.

8) If Jesus could tell you how He wants you to love Him, what would He say?

How would you respond to His request?

Putting Yourself in the Picture

Making Time for Jesus

You have discussed how important it is to spend time with Jesus. This time with Him will help deepen and develop your friendship. Look at the coming week and schedule specific time to be with Him. Make this as much a priority as anything else in your schedule. If you keep a personal planner, write your time with Jesus in among the other appointments or responsibilities in your day. You might feel a need to commit time every day or maybe three or four times in the coming week. Be realistic with your schedule, but also seek to grow in your commitment to be with Jesus. If you are going to grow as a fully devoted follower of Christ, time with Him is essential.

A Commitment to Memorize Scripture

Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friend. (John 15:13)