



Practices for

LIFE WITH JESUS

Part 8: The Practice of Spiritual Friendship

John 15:9-17

*Spiritual friendship is both a stream of God's love
and a witness to His Love in Jesus.*

- **THE CHALLENGE OF FRIENDSHIP**

The seeds of our current radical individualism were planted in the Enlightenment and have now come to full flower. In 1835 Alexis de Tocqueville named extreme individualism as a defining American trait and said that, if left unchecked, it would spell the abolition of humanity.

"The greatest disease in the West today is not TB or leprosy; it is being unwanted, unloved and uncared for. We can cure physical diseases with medicine, but the only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness is love. There are many in the world who are dying for a piece of bread, but there are many more dying for a little love. The poverty in the West is a different kind of poverty - it is not only a poverty of loneliness but also of spirituality." Mother Teresa

The Gospel provides us the resources to resist our culture's fierce individualism and cure our loneliness.

- **THE COMMUNITY OF JESUS' FRIENDS**

- **Jesus' Lifestyle of Friendship**

Jesus lived out the value of friendship. He had friends with whom He shared His life and invited into God's family. He made it clear that these friendships were His true family connections trumping even His biological family (Matthew 12:48-49).

- **Chosen to be Jesus' Friends (John 15:15-16)**

For the follower of Jesus, all of life is lived in response to God's radical loving grace in Jesus Christ (John 15:9, 13-16).

Unlike our *cancel culture* of radical individualism, God did not choose to cancel us when we rebelled and sinned against Him. Instead, He chose to radically love us.

“Christianity is intended to be a freehearted collaboration between Jesus and his friends.” Dallas Willard

– **Chosen to be a Community of Spiritual Friends (John 15:12, 17)**

Three common barriers to spiritual friendship:

- Individualism
- Idealism
- Intimidation

• **JESUS’ VISION FOR HIS CHURCH**

Jesus calls us His friends, and He gives us the Holy Spirit to love each other with a fierce resiliency.

“My command is this: love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.” John 15:12-13

The way we love each other with a fierce resiliency will be a witness to our culture that there is a love in Jesus worth pursuing.

“Everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.” John 13:35

Resources:

- For discussion questions and more reflections, see Greenwood’s *Practices*: <https://greenwoodcc.com/friendship/>.
- Listen to Greenwood’s Lent 2021 podcast “The Last Conversations of Jesus: Episode One” by Aaron Cross (<https://greenwoodcc.libsyn.com/episode-1-the-sleepers>).