

Christlike Friendships

Luke 5:27-32

Introduction: There were some who derisively called Jesus “a friend” of tax collectors and sinners. It is a fact that is pretty hard to miss if you’ve spent any time in the Gospels – Jesus was indeed a friend to those who were far from God. Could the same be said of us? Are we friends of those who are far from God? Today, we continue our look at this topic of helping people come to faith in Christ.

Opening Discussion: What are your thoughts on the following quote, which Steve shared? What do you think about the idea that if we don’t have friends outside the church there is something wrong with us?

Tom Clegg and Warren Bird are right when they write this in their book *Lost in America*:

When I meet Christians who say they don’t have any friends outside the church, I try to ask some probing questions. I usually discover that the reason is not because they’re incapable of making friends. Rather, they’re misunderstanding the gospel. They’re thinking like consumers – it’s for *me*, to solve *my* issues, *my* problems, and *my* dysfunctions. They think the point of the gospel is individual – for *my* benefit alone.

The problem for most people is not a lack of social skills but a lack of God’s perspective. If we don’t have friends outside the church there’s something wrong with us – and our version of Christianity. (pp. 134-135)

Read Luke 5:27-32

1. Who does Jesus call to follow him and what was his profession?
2. Who was at Matthew’s party?
3. What was significant about Jesus “reclining at the table with them” (v. 29)?
4. Why did the religious leaders critique Jesus and his disciple’s presence at this party?

5. What does Jesus say of his ministry?
6. What does vs. 32 mean?
7. Why was Jesus comfortable at a party attended almost entirely by people whom others had rejected?

Steve said:

One area in which people outside the church think we're unChristian involves the topic we've been discussing today. The Barna Group found that only 34% of those surveyed believe that "Christians genuinely care about them." But when Christians were asked whether they think people outside the church would say that Christians genuinely care about them, 64% said yes. The relevant thing is that 2/3 of those outside the church don't think we really care about them.

8. Why do you think 34% of the people surveyed don't believe Christians care about them, yet 64% of Christians say they do? Why the difference?

Steve said:

My question for you today is, "Would you consider intentionally befriending others who need to know God?" Again, I'm not just talking about being friendly; I'm talking about befriending people – letting them into your life, spending unhurried time with them, being genuinely interested in their lives.

9. Are you willing to intentionally befriend others who need to know God? Explain.
10. What are your struggles when you think of really doing this?
11. What can you do to follow Christ's example more consciously this week?

12. On the following chart list the names of five people with whom you could begin to develop a friendship. Write down one first step that you could take to begin:

Name	First Step