

CHURCH AT HOME

WEEK 19

26/07/2020



Welcome

Welcome to our **Church at Home** thoughts and service on this Sunday morning. This week we begin a new series looking at the theme of: **Friendships**. Today is all about **Friendship In The Christian Community**. All you will need for the service and to help you in your thinking can be found on these sheets.

IF IT IS POSSIBLE, AS
FAR AS IT DEPENDS ON
YOU, LIVE AT PEACE
WITH EVERYONE.

ROMANS 12:18

Call to Worship

Psalm 121 v. 1-8 NLT

I look up to the mountains -

Does my help come from there?

My help comes from the Lord,

Who made the heavens and the earth!

He will not let you stumble and fall;

The one who watches over you will not sleep.

Indeed, he who watches over Israel

Never tires and never sleeps.

The Lord himself watches over you!

The Lord stands besides you as your protective shade.

The sun will not hurt you by day, nor the moon at night.

The Lord keeps you from all evil and preserves your life.

The Lord keeps watch over you as you come and go, both now and forever.

SONG SUGGESTIONS

How Deep The Father's Love

Amazing Love

Prayer

God our Creator, Father and Friend, we give thanks for the wonderful gift of life, with all its joys and responsibilities, its experiences and opportunities. We praise you for good health, and daily food, for the shelter and care of our homes, and the love and loyalty of our friends. We bless you for work honestly done, for games well played, and for all the truth we have learned and the good we have been able to achieve. We thank you for the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness and salvation we have received through him, for his presence with us always and for the service into which he has called us. Help us to express our thanks not only in our praises and prayers, but also through the lives we lead; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen



Bible Reading

Romans 12 v. 9 - 21

New International Version (NIV)

Love in Action

⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. ¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. ¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³ Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay,"¹ says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Our Giving To God



While we are unable to meet physically at church and are therefore not able to give of our finances to the work that goes on in the church, why not consider what you would normally put into the offering, and then put this aside until we meet again. We can then all give with a grateful heart and praise God for all that he has given to us.



Intercessions

Let us pray this week:

We pray for those we know who struggle with mental illnesses, anxiety and depression. We pray that there will be resources released to help, enough staff employed and finances given towards mental health services nationally. Help us to be a friend and a listening ear to those who suffer. Fill us with compassion and wisdom. Ultimately, we pray for those who wrestle with sorrow, that they may know your victory over those dark thoughts which currently seem to triumph.

Thank You for this day, Lord, And for the wind and rain, We think of many barren lands where no-one would complain. Thank You for the time we shared and for our plans and schemes, We think of people round the world who lost their hopes and dreams. Thank You for life's simple things, for blessings on the way, For all we take for granted, Lord, and thank You for today.

Lord, we pray this day for those who are hurting, those who are fearful and those who are grieving, be close to these brothers and sisters for whom we pray, may they find you in their pain, within their fear and sharing their sadness; and, finding you, may they find healing for their hurt, love for their fear, and peace for their distress.

Lord, we lift up to you the community that we are part of; for the shops around us, the schools, the churches, and all that makes up our community. May your blessing rest upon them as they seek to make sense of the ongoing Coronavirus and its implications for their futures.

The Lords Prayer

Our Father who art in Heaven
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, forever and ever.

Amen



SONG SUGGESTIONS

As The Deer Pants For The Water

Church at Home Thought

Someone once wrote: 'It was the journey of a lifetime. I had a round the world air ticket and was travelling with two friends. During our journey we lived in close proximity and made innumerable decisions. Where would we stay? Whom would we visit? What would we do each day? Would we do things together or apart? Where would we eat? What were the essential places to visit in the limited time available? Which cultural experiences could we not miss and where would we worship? We are long-term friends who have our own homes. Living out of suitcases and sharing bedrooms required all the negotiation and communication skills that we could muster. Afterwards all of us agreed that the journey was wonderful. We learned a lot about the people and places visited but even more about ourselves. We laughed and wept together, exercised patience and tolerance, shared resources, resolved differences, explored our beliefs and had some of them challenged. In a sense we

became more fully human because, sharing as we did, we each found that the rough edges of our personalities were being smoothed down. You could say that through sharing the journey we were becoming more Christ – like; being honed and refined. There were times when I remembered Paul and wondered whether his experiences on his long missionary journeys were similar to ours.'

It is only in western societies do we find people living alone, or in small, private households.

We value **our** individualism, and mainstream culture suggests that we should **look** after number one, sometimes at the expense of community. However, the Christian calling is to live as friends, like brothers and sisters, in the community of God's people - usually a local church that is firmly placed in the world.

In this community we are to be practical friends, with a

common purpose to worship and serve the Lord. We are to recognise that our friendships can have a powerful influence on both good and bad. **Proverbs 13 v. 20** says: ***'Whoever walks with the wise will become wise; whoever walks with fools will suffer harm'***.

There are warnings against close friendships with unwise, evil, violent people who are not committed to the way of peaceful friendship (**Proverbs 22 v. 24; 24 v. 1, 2**), yet we are to offer practical friendship to them (**Romans 12 v. 17 - 21**) as we aim to **'conquer evil with good'**.

Friendship in the church

Through a letter, Paul called his friends in Rome (**Romans 12 v. 9 - 21**) to a life of deep, practical love in ways that might remind us of the Sermon on the Mount which can be found in **Matthew 5**.

When you read through **Romans 12 v. 9** you begin to see how intensely practical the guidelines are.

Friendship in the local Christian community had to be worked at and there had to be a degree of knowing one another, of openness and honesty, of

sincerity and respect, of sharing resources, of working and praying together and of **'being there for one another'**.

We are called to let love govern all our attitudes and actions. We are called to love even those we consider to be our enemies. We have all been wronged by others. God's love allows us to forgive them and seek reconciliation. All of us have hurt others. Love calls us to ask for their forgiveness and do what we can to make up for the trouble and pain we have caused.

Often we need to make a special effort to reach out to immediate family members – parents, siblings, children, a spouse. Love sometimes call us to swallow our pride and admit our wrongs to others. When we do, our relationships can be healed by God, and our own spiritual condition can be improved. Through the process of living in friendship in this way, people would be changed and their community life would speak for itself to those outside.

Yet, according to Paul, the community witness was to go even further by extending love and forgiveness to those outside the fellowship, not least to those who might wish them ill (**Romans 12 v. 14, 17**).

Friendship in my church

Compare what you read with the realities of life in your church that you find yourself in at the moment.. Would you describe it as friendly? Do people actually know each other and share friendship in practical ways? How would a stranger perceive your friendships within the church - would they see people who love one another warmly as Christians? Would they see a church concerned for others and providing practical help for those in other parts of the world?

We are told in **Acts 18 v. 4, 5** that the Macedonian church, aware of Paul's needs, sent gifts and money with Timothy and Silas. Consequently Paul spent more time sharing the good news and less time tent - making to provide for his daily needs. They were practical friends.

Of course, there is no such thing as a perfect church. However, things can improve if there is the will to respond positively to Christ's call to be practical friends.

Romans 12 v. 9 - 21 is an extremely hard – hitting passage of Scripture. It is as though Paul

is firing exhortations at us like bullets - twenty-four of them in total, dealing with the Christian's attitude to the Lord (**v. 11**), the church (**v. 13**), his neighbour (**v. 16**), his enemy (**v. 20**) and himself (**v. 9, 11**). From these far - reaching statements, we can focus on some that are relevant to us today in relation to Friendship in the Christian Community.

There are many things here which challenge us as to the kind of friendship we ought to practise within own church.

Here are four '**bullets**' that maybe we need to bite if we aim to make our Christian friendships count:

THE BULLET OF LOVE (Romans 12 v. 9, 10)

Love is at the heart of any meaningful human relationship, for love is at the heart of all that God is. '**God is love**' and, because of this, he '**so loved the world**' (**John 3 v. 16**) that he sent his Son, Jesus, to save the world.

Love is forever looking outward to others; by its very nature it cannot be self-centred. Paul begins this section with a clarion call to Christians to '**be genuine**'

in their love for others. We are not to be hypocritical, pretending to love, so he provides some examples of what loving involves:

- **Hate evil.** As Christians we have to learn that there are judgements to be made in life which will affect our spirits. Evil is anything destructive of God's purposes in the world, like pride, bitterness and discrimination against others. These are inconsistent with God's love.

- **Hold fast to what is good.** Everything wholesome is to be embraced. We are to give ourselves to actions that are healthy and character building: encouragement, support and service to those around us.

- **Show affection.** The Bible distinguishes between the '**agape**' love to be offered to all, Christians and non-Christians alike, and the '**brotherly affection**' which is reserved for our closer friends and fellow believers. '**Agape**' love is offered from the will and aims at the good of the individual, even an enemy (**Luke 6 v. 27**); brotherly affection, however, springs from the heart and results in a bonding of two or more individuals.

- '**Outdo one another**' in showing honour. No matter what our rank, position or status, each

believer is a child of God and deserves to be honoured as such within the family of the church. Even the wealthy Philemon was to receive his errant slave Onesimus back as a Christian brother (**Philemon 1 v. 15, 16**).

If this were truly practised, it would transform our attitude to each other, and in turn transform our churches.

THE BULLET OF CARE (Romans 12 v. 13)

Christian love has a practical side to it as well; sometimes evident in compassion (**as felt by Jesus**) and sometimes expressed in practical care (**as shown by Jesus**). Christians need to be demonstrating practical expressions of their new - found friendships wherever they see the need arising. Again, Paul suggests ways in which this should be evident:

- **Giving to one another.** Situations continually arise in which some among us will need practical support, and not just in obvious ways - clothes, food,

books, music, furnishings (1 John 3 v. 17).

- **Sharing our home in hospitality.** Some may find this easier than others, but the rewards of doing so are enormous. Friendships are cemented, burdens halved, and hopes are shared. It may not be possible at the moment to do this, but why not open up your home? You may even find yourself entertaining an angel (Hebrews 13 v. 2)!

THE BULLET OF HUMILITY (Romans 12 v. 15, 16)

Harmony should be increasingly evident amongst friends and within the local church. Paul again, ever practical, suggests:

- **Do not be proud or conceited.** Both these words refer to a kind of snobbish superiority which is occasionally apparent in some of us. This is a barrier which has to be removed **if** we are to practise Christian love and befriend those who are different from us.

- **Make a point of associating with 'the lowly'.** No matter whether or not you feel you are among **'the lowly'**, ours is a culture in which image, designer labels, attending the right places and knowing the right people are seen as increasingly important. The Christian ethic therefore makes real demands upon us. It involves going out of our way to meet and befriend others of a different class, who live in a different area or move in a different social group.

We are called to be part of a Christian counterculture.

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THE BULLET OF PEACE (Romans 12 v. 18 – 20)

If making friends is an important Christian duty, so is maintaining them. Friendships have to be kept in good repair.

- We are to make sure we live at peace with our neighbour, our friend, our associates, our boss, our spouse, our children, our enemy - with everyone! If there is a disagreement or dispute, the

Christian is to be the one to go the extra mile for the maintenance of peaceful relations.

- We are not to resort to revenge, which can have bitter consequences. The peaceful way promotes good health, maintains genial relations and benefits the church as a whole.

Have you ever wondered what would happen if you practised peace this coming week and tried to live in a way that is suggested by Paul in Romans 12 v. 9 - 21, you might just see God transform everything around you.

Questions to Ponder



- Who do I associate with the most in my church? Why do I associate with these people more than others?
- If God loves me enough to send Jesus to die for me, how can I learn from his example in the way I love others around me?
- What type of friend do I want to be?



True Love

Love can always conquer
Whatever discord brings
and love can also cover
a multitude of things.

Don't you underestimate
what love can ever do,
for love is God eternal
and His love can renew.

What is cold and lifeless,
now lost all hope and died,
for love can breathe new meaning
and give it back new life.

Please don't give up on love
when it seems that all is lost,
for there is always hope
if we're prepared to pay the cost.

For love is always worth it
no matter how much the price,
for love will be much stronger
when we trust in Jesus Christ.

So let God have full reign,
let Him live within your heart
then you will know true love,
for this He will impart.

SONG SUGGESTIONS

The Greatest Day In History

Your Love Never Fails



Blessing

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work among us, to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!

AMEN



News

COVID-19 Update

The leadership team unfortunately have had to make a decision that the church building cannot at present open until at least September. They will review this decision towards the end of August.

The church building may be closed but we are not gone.

At the moment, we are:

- **Sunday** - publishing 'Church at Home'. Our engaging Sunday services in an online format. Alongside of this we are sharing our Sunday Zoom meeting. This Zoom is specifically for prayer and a little bit of worship. Contact minister@snbch.org.uk for more details.
- **Monday** - sharing 'Monday Prayers'. 'Monday Prayers' are our collection of prayers and thoughts for you to start the week
- **Tuesday** - hosting a Zoom meeting every Tuesday. This is a fun way of staying connected with others at SNBC, with a chat, and quiz! Contact minister@snbch.org.uk for more details.
- **Wednesday** - publishing a Bible Study. The studies are from the book of Hosea and will follow the overall theme entitled: God's Persistent Love (This is the last study in the book of Hosea)
- **Once a month** - Creating our 'Monthly Prayer Diary' - Prayer is an important part of the life of our church, so why not join in praying with us over the course of a month?

Follow us on Facebook @SalendineNookBaptistChurch, visit our website - www.snbch.org.uk or use the contact sheet below to stay connected with us.

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