

THE LOST ART OF FRIENDSHIP

TALK IT OVER

Surprising Friendships

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If you would like to watch the weekend message, visit www.saddleback.com/watch.

Open your group in prayer, and remember that this is only a guide. Feel free to discuss each of the provided questions, or simply dive deeper into just one. Before you close with prayer, take a few minutes to look over the Three Essential Questions toward the end of the document.

Scriptures

Genesis 1:26 (NKJV); Acts 2:5–6 (NKJV); Revelation 7:9–10 (NKJV); John 4:3–10 (NKJV); John 15:12–17 (NKJV); 2 Corinthians 5:18–20 (NKJV); Acts 17:24–28 (NKJV)

Questions

1. According to Genesis 1:26 (NKJV), “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’” In whose image are we created, according to this verse? How does that affect the way you feel about yourself? How does it affect the way you feel about others and how you should treat them?
2. Acts 2:5–6 (NKJV) says, “Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.” How might surprising friendships between people “from every nation under heaven” have begun to rapidly develop on the day of Pentecost, when God gave the Holy Spirit to the church?
3. Surprising friendships, where we grow in relationships with people unlike ourselves, honor God, who created us as a diverse people. Discuss how this is reflected in Revelation 7:9–10 (NKJV): “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’”
4. Jesus went to Samaria just so that he could meet the Samaritan woman at the well—and she became the first person to whom he revealed himself as Messiah! According to John 4:9–10 (NKJV), “The woman of Samaria said to Him, ‘How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?’ For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered and said to her, ‘If

you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, "Give Me a drink," you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." Discuss what is surprising with regard to this meeting between Jesus and the Samaritan woman.

5. Perhaps the most surprising friendships of all are how God in Christ brings people into relationship with him and adopts them into his family! Jesus called the disciples his friends, he said, because he had spoken to them openly, and he had made known to them everything that he had heard from the Father. Discuss how sharing your life authentically can lead to surprising friendships. How do friendships like this bless you, and how do they bless others?
6. Per Acts 17:26 (NKJV), *"He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings."* We're united by the blood of Christ at the communion table, and at the marriage supper of the Lamb, God will seat us together as one people in all of our diversity. How are we alike according to Acts 17:26, and how is the table a kingdom strategy for surprising friendships? How can you sit at—or set—surprising tables reflecting God's love for all people?
7. Surprising friendships are part of God's kingdom purpose of reconciling the world to Himself. According to 2 Corinthians 5:18–20 (NKJV), *"Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God."* Discuss how we can intentionally develop surprising friendships that fulfill God's purpose for us to be *"ambassadors for Christ,"* reconciling the world to God.

Three Essential Questions

The following questions are intended to be open-ended and encourage members to consider how they felt and what they, or the group, can do as a result of hearing the message.

1. **What did you hear?** *What point in this message was most impactful for you?*
2. **What do you think?** *How did this message challenge, change, or affirm your thinking?*
3. **What will you do?** *How will you or your group put into practice what you've learned today?*

Small Group Action Steps

1. Consider taking the Group Health Assessment in your small group. This assessment will help you see how your small group is balancing the five purposes and will give you suggested next steps for each purpose. Click here to take the Group Health Assessment:
<https://saddleback.com/connect/smallgroups#spiritualCheckup>
2. Did you know that Saddleback produces many new small group studies each year? Visit <https://saddleback.com/studies> to check out Saddleback's ever-growing library of small group curriculum.

Are you interested in the Bible and in helping small groups benefit from the weekend message? Well, you are in luck! Saddleback members like you create these discussion guides each week. If you are interested in joining the team, please email Maturity@saddleback.com