

050419

- I. My Notes... WWC message 5/5
- II. Series: Let's Find Out Who We Are
 - a. Title: Friends with Benefits
 - b. Text: John 15:16
 - c. Quote: "Yet as I read the birth stories about Jesus I cannot help but conclude that though the world may be tilted toward the rich and powerful, God is tilted toward the underdog." Phillip Yancey (Author)
- III. Introductions
 - a. God is writing His story... on your heart – throughout your life – in your choices, actions, and attitudes. His testimony, His character, is observed by others in the way you live and act/react to the daily situations and circumstances you encounter. Too often, we think "our lives" are a reflection of who we are. This is why we need to understand the position and place we hold, our rights and benefits, the responsibilities we have – IN CHRIST. There are all kinds of statements, quotes, thoughts, that are designed to make us aware of this thought. "You might be the only Jesus someone else sees" "You are the only Bible others read" ... and so on. While I think the purpose is to encourage believers that their behaviors have influence, their actions and choices hold real meanings, more often than not these statements bring guilt or feelings of worthlessness. Think about this for a moment, in the middle of your failures – of you coming up short – of the poor choices or decisions – (of whatever you can put on this list) – God is right there, He is standing with you and beside you, to encourage and support, showing mercy and compassion, making something wonderful out of the mess you see. Know that it is His story, it

might be our life, but it is His testimony that is accomplished in the way we live and interact with others.

- b. Sometimes I feel like a commentator on life (especially mine). I have heard many people wonder “where is God now, when I need Him?” or if the Lord is even listening to their prayers or pleas. is the issue... most people want their relationship with God on their terms – meeting their expectations. The fact is this is a view that limits the ability of the Lord to work in their lives. I'm not saying that God isn't capable, He is. Here What I'm telling you is that the solution we need (not the one that we expect or want) is likely just outside of the tunnel we are staring into. Recently, I knew a person who was struggling, who was very vocal about needing assistance. In fact, they make it very difficult to want to help them because of their demands and expectations. It's clear that the only way to do things is “their way” and if it's not done their way then complaints and grumbling abounds. If everything was done my way, then the only one who would be at peace and content is me. The disappointment that God isn't listening or that He doesn't really care about the circumstances before us comes from a lack of trust in the relationship that we have “In Him”. We seek an intimate and authentic relationship on our terms – often because we know no other way. There is a better way. It involves trust and friendship
- c. Being a friend is important. It is a relationship that comes from choice and commitment. God wants friends too! Friends are there when the days get difficult and listen when life doesn't seem to make sense. Friends accept you for who you are and where you are. It's good to see someone real, authentic, and who sees things just as they are. Friends are accountable, issues are dealt with and handled in way that benefits everyone involved. In Scripture, Abraham (Is. 41:8), Moses (Ex. 33:11), and Lazarus (John 11:11) were identified as “friends” of God and Jesus. Friends answer the phone at all hours and are a shoulder to lean on. Why would God want any of us to be a friend of His? It's not about being a servant, the Lord desires that real

relationship. God said about Abraham, "I have chosen him so he would command his children and his descendants to live the way the LORD wants them to, to live right and be fair. Then I, the LORD, will give Abraham what I promised him." (Genesis 18:19 NCV) Abraham was faithful in His relationship with the Lord, He was committed. It is what God wants in each of us. Living real, acting practically toward one another, and being guided by love are behaviors that reveal an authentic relationship. Just after the Last Supper and prior to His arrest, Jesus Genesis 18:19 (NCV) e told the Disciples that He saw them as, "my friends" (John 15:14-15). Being a servant, living obedient grows out of love. It doesn't make sense to do things that intentionally hurt or distress relationships.

- d. I remember growing up, I was a chubby little kid and I was often excluded or picked last to be on a team. It's hard getting the feeling of rejection, of not being good enough to participate ... at least in the eyes of your "so-called" friends. Then, there was a teacher who saw something in me, it was something that I wasn't able to see inside myself. During this time there were family struggles (most of us have endured them) and this brought stress to daily life – we just didn't talk about it. Anyway, Jerry Hilton became my hero. During those days I would have done anything for him. He taught me to love to listen to Glen Campbell, he showed me that it was the effort – not the results that had the most meaning. If you did your best, it would always work out in the best possible manner. And Mr. Hilton chose me first to be on his baseball team at school. This experience shaped the rest of my time in school. Mr. Hilton was my teacher but during that year he became a friend – he watched out for me in the hard times and talked to me about life through the lessons he learned playing baseball.
- e. I found out what it meant to be chosen, to be given a sense of belonging and purpose. This is what the Lord wants for us as we grow in grace and come to know Him more and more.

IV. Let's Get Started

a. John 15:16 (CSB)

You did not choose me, but I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you.

b. Let me set the scene

c. Just a few days before this conversation, Jesus had entered Jerusalem to the praises and adoration of many. He rode in on a donkey, Palm branches were laid out

d. It was time for Passover – the Last Supper was about to take place

e. Jesus washed the Disciples feet and explained to them the meaning of what He had done (John 13:15)

f. He predicted His betrayal

g. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit, another Counselor, would come and be with them. (John 14:15-17)

h. He talked to the Disciples about love and the way they are supposed to act toward each other

i. And now, He tells them that they are not servants, that they are friends (John 15:13-15)

j. This all happens prior to His arrest, trial, and crucifixion

V. Chosen by God... What Does That Mean?

a. God chose Israel to be His special people – to be the messengers of love and grace to the World (Deut. 7: 6-8)

- b. God chose Saul (1 Sam. 10:24-27) and David (1 Sam. 16:10-12) to be king
- c. Jesus chose the Disciples to be the messengers of the Gospel (John 6:70)
- d. We are chosen to proclaim (declare) the grace and mercy we have come to know due to our relationship with Jesus (1 Pet. 2:9-10)
- e. One of the things we talk about here, is our calling – each of us has been called. The Lord wants each of us to learn of His mercy and grace
- f. His way is the path to peace and contentment. For that to happen, each person must acknowledge the need for change
- g. We have been chosen to declare the love and grace of the Lord to those around us

VI. Bearing Fruit

- a. The choice that Jesus made was to love and encourage each person. He is willing to protect, support man – to be the lifter of our head (Psalm 3:3)
- b. Jesus choice was a way of Him saying, I understand what you are about to face... the struggles that you will have. Take comfort, find peace, I am with you – protecting you, guiding you, and proud of you
- c. And the fruit we get to “bear”, to show to everyone around is ... Love
- d. Paul prayed for the church... “So this is my prayer: that your love will flourish and that you will not only love much but well. Learn to love appropriately. You need to use your head and test your feelings” (Philippians 1:9 MSG)
- e. His prayer is that our character, our actions and behaviors are based in love – compassion - grace
- f. Jesus told us that His choice was for us to bear fruit – to be ready to show love to others.

g. Galatians 5:22-24 (ESV)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

h. The character we have, as believers, is based and revealed in love... the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love and it is explained in the qualities listed. Each is a quality of love

VII. Jesus Choice

a. Hebrews 5:7-8 (CSB)

During his earthly life, he offered prayers and appeals with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was the Son, he learned obedience from what he suffered.

b. Adam chose suffering and sin over a life of peace in the Garden. Jesus had a choice in His life

c. Now, this may sound unusual because Jesus is God. All that God is, Jesus is. The God desires has, so does Jesus. God's will and Jesus' will is one in the same.

d. But God is big on choice, on allowing all freedom to make their own decision

e. Adam made a choice; you and I have made choices.

f. The choice Jesus made – to live sinless, to love wholly, and to honor the Father ultimately brought Him honor and respect from the Father

g. Philippians 2: 5-11 explains it to us

h. Jesus chose you and I because that is the will of God

i. 1 Corinthians 1:9 (MSG)

God, who got you started in this spiritual adventure, shares with us the life of his Son and our Master Jesus. He will never give up on you. Never forget that.

j. One of the big privileges we have, as Christians, is learning what it means to develop a relationship with the Lord. It's about getting to know Him better and better. Trusting the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And growing in knowledge of Him

k. We are as close to God as we choose to be... And He wants us to be faithful, to be consistent to who He has purposed us to be

VIII. Final Thought

a. 10 THINGS GOD WON'T ASK

1. God won't ask what kind of car you drove. He'll ask how many people you drove who didn't have transportation.

2. God won't ask the square footage of your house. He'll ask how many people you welcomed into your home.

3. God won't ask about the clothes you had in your closet; He'll ask how many you helped to clothe.

4. God won't ask what your highest salary was; He'll ask if you compromised your character to obtain it.

5. God won't ask what your job title was; He'll ask if you did your best and helped others along the way

6. God won't ask how many friends you had; He'll ask about the people who you were a friend to.

7. God won't ask in what neighborhood you lived; He'll ask how much love you showed to those who were in your neighborhood

8. God won't ask about your physical characteristics and abilities; He'll ask about the content of your character.

9. God won't ask about your struggles and doubts in your relationship with Him; He'll lovingly take you to your mansion in heaven, and not to the gates of Hell.

10. God will not question when or why you did not share His love for others; He already knows about you attitude of sharing His love and grace with others

b. Our choice is to be fruit bearers – conduits of love and grace

c. Let's Pray

d. May you see the choice of God's love as beautiful and beneficial to your life. May the Holy Spirit guide you into the fullness of His grace. And may you see, each day, the reality of His kindness in your life