

Friendship Jesus-Style ->Pt. 1 True friends make each other better people

We're starting this new series on a very important topic: friendship. Friendship is something that everybody wants, but it can come with a lot of potential ups & downs. Of course, friendships are super important & can have vast impacts on your life. It's hard to argue against this wise phrase: **Show me your friends & I'll show you your future**. See, there are "friends" - causal people we hang around & do things with. They might not be the best friends & sometimes these friendships lead to personal troubles & pain. These kind of "friends" often leave when the going gets tough or when "better friends" than you come along. But there's also the seemingly rare friendships that are real & true. These kind of friendships have friends that are hopeful, reassuring, encouraging, comforting, patient, truthful, forgiving, faithful, loyal, humble, serving & loving. So in this series, we're gonna look at true friendship: having true friends & being one too.

The topic of friendship is common among movies. The *Monster Inc.* movies feature a great friendship, the Sully & Mike. In the second movie, a prequel called *Monsters University*, we get to see how these two monsters became best friends. At first, Mike & Sully couldn't stand each other & were rivals at Monster U. Mike was the book-smart, not-so-scary monster, while Sully was the egotistical, naturally scary monster. Mike gravitated to the nerds, while Sully was instantly adopted by the cool fraternity monsters. Due to their shenanigans, Mike & Sully ended up getting kicked out of the Scare class. Mike struck up a deal with Dear Hardscrabble to get back into the scare school if his team could win the Scare Games. Sully reluctantly joins Mike & his team of misfits from the Oozema Kappa fraternity. Along the way, Mike really starts being a great friend to the Oozema Kappa squad & starts building them up. He gets them to believe in themselves & makes them all better monsters. Mike even teaches the formerly proud Sully a lot of his technical scare knowledge. In the end, Mike's efforts to build up his friends pays off & they win the Scare Games. Despite ultimately being kicked out of Monster University, Mike & Sully become life-long best of friends.

And this brings us to our first point about true friends: **true friends make each other better people**. But that's not always the case for our friends, right? Just think about your life: have you ever had a "friend" that was all about themselves, their plans, their ego, etc? They didn't build you up or make you better, they just benefited themselves all the time. Or have you ever noticed that in a group of friends, things oftentimes sinks to the language, attitudes & behaviors of the worst person in the group??? Have you ever had that "friend" that always influenced you in a bad way, a "friend" that seemed to always lead you into bad circumstances or bad habits? They didn't make you better -they made you a worse human being! God's word says, **Don't fool yourselves. Bad friends will destroy you (1Cor 15:33)**. True friends don't drag you down, they build you up. Here's an very important friendship gauge: just simply ask yourself, *"Are my friends building me up in positive, moral & godly ways or are they dragging me down in negative, immoral, ungodly ways?"* The fact is, we need good friends, ones that can build us up. So we should really want true friends, real friends that make us better people & build us up.

But how do we know what a true friend looks like? Well, we simply need to look at Jesus & see what kind of a friend He was. He was such an amazing friend that He died in your place (John 15:13). When people met Jesus & He became friends with them, they experienced His perfect, true friendship. Throughout the Bible, Jesus shows His true friendship to the people He met. Jesus was hopeful, reassuring, encouraging, comforting, patient, truthful, forgiving, faithful, loyal, humble, serving & loving to all who came to Him. It's an understatement to say that after people became friends with Jesus they became **much better people**. In fact, they became holy in the sight of God, their old, sinful ways of life were stripped away as they became new beings in friendship with Jesus. That's what **Heb 10:14** means.

The same is true today- when Jesus becomes your Savior & friend, that relationship with Him makes you holy in God's sight. And as you grow in Jesus, you literally become **much better person**. Think about David Berkowitz, the former 'Son of Sam' pschyo-killer, we talked about last week. Jesus saved David & made him new & holy, the much better person that he is today. Jesus did that to me too & to all here who've entered into an eternal friendship with Him.

Jesus is are ultimate friend. And just as we want & need Jesus, and we want Him to make us holy, shouldn't we also want true earthly friends that make us better people, that build us up, that help us turn from troubles? Now, your friends can't make you holy, but they certainly can encourage you to become more like Jesus. And a true friend will do just that, they will encourage & help you to be more like Jesus: our ultimate example of a true friend. Again, I think about David Berkowitz. He is a true friend to 1000s of prison inmates. David now helps them to know Jesus & become more like Jesus too.

So not only should we want true friends that help make us better & more like Jesus, we should also want **to be** the kind of friend that builds others up in Christ. You've probably heard this wise phrase before: **Be the friend you'd want to have**. And at first glance, that seems hard or counter-intuitive because we are often "me-focused". We sometimes look on our friends as people we can get stuff out of or as people that will benefit us in some way. We shouldn't be like that, we need to live out God's Word in **Phil 2:4 Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others too**. That what Jesus did, He took an interest in you, dying in your place. That's true friendship! God's Word says, we should **...encourage one another and build one another up (1Thes 5:11a) & As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend (Prov 27:17)**. That's the kind of friend Jesus is and we should all strive to be that kind of friend too, the one that builds people up & makes them better for knowing you. So friends, the world is full of fake "friends", self-serving "friends", temporary "friends". Let's flip the script & be the kind of friend that Jesus is to us! Your friends will thank you & God will be it.

BIBLE VERSES

1Cor 15:33 Don't fool yourselves. Bad friends will destroy you.

John 15:13 (NCV) The greatest love a person can show is to die for his friends.

Prov 27:17 As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.

1Thes 5:11a ...encourage one another and build one another up.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do we have any *Monsters Inc./Monsters University* fans here tonight? What do you like about them?
- 2a. Someone once said, *"Show me your friends & I'll show you your future."* Why are friends & friendships so important?
3. Read 1Cor 15:33. We all want friends, but sometimes our "friends" drag us down. Has this ever happened to you? Explain.
4. Read John 15:13. By His sacrifice for us, Jesus proved He's truly our ultimate friend. Let's look at the *Jesus-Ultimate Friend* cards & discuss what we can learn about true friendship based on Jesus' ultimate friendship.
5. Read Prov 27:17. Do your friends make you a better person, do they build you up in positive, moral ways & encourage you to be more like Jesus? Explain your answer.
6. Read 1Thes 5:11a. Let's be honest, we could all be better friends, like Jesus is. How could you become a better friend? What might happen if you became a better friend?

CLOSING PRAYER: Dear Jesus, thank You for being our greatest friend. You proved Your love & friendship for us by dying on the cross in our place. Thank You for Your amazing sacrifice for us! Lord help give us true friends that will encourage us to be more like You. Lord help us to be a friend like You to the people in our life. We pray all this in Your Name, Jesus. Amen!