



## WEEKLY STUDY

### Week Five

Our summer series called Pathways is introducing eight practices that help us get closer to the heart of God. So far, we've explored the practices of solitude, fasting, worship, and Scripture study. This week Pastor Mark taught about the pathway of Spiritual Friendship.

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected to a Providence Small Group visit [prov.church/signup](http://prov.church/signup) and click on Small Groups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture. Follow the daily prayer prompt and then pray this prayer lifting up a different friend each day.

*Lord, I especially thank You today for the friendship of \_\_\_\_\_ (NAME) \_\_\_\_\_. I offer this friendship to You and ask for your grace and mercy to be with him/her. And I offer this particular need in my friend's life \_\_\_\_\_ (NEED) \_\_\_\_\_. I thank You for Your unwavering love for each of us, dear Lord, and for the gift of perfect friendship we have in Jesus Christ. Amen.*

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## DAILY STUDY

### MONDAY: JOHN 15.12-15

*My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.*

- All of our true friendships are possible because Jesus calls us friends and demonstrates what true friendship looks like. How does it feel to know that Jesus calls you his friend? We move into this friend relationship by walking in the ways of Christ, by following the path to God he laid out for us. What does it mean to do what Jesus has commanded?
- *Pray with gratitude for the humility of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to call us friends. Pray for the same kind of humility in your relationships with others.*

## **TUESDAY: 1 SAMUEL 18.1,3-4**

*After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. ...And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. 4 Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.*

- Jonathan and David formed a friendship that was so rare and beautiful that it can be difficult to understand. As you think through your day to day relationships, consider how many of them are founded in a covenant like that of David and Jonathon. How many of your relationships are really transactional when it comes down to it?
- *Pray that you might love others with the kind of self-giving love that Jonathon and David shared in their friendship.*

## **WEDNESDAY: PROVERBS 17.7, 18.24, 27.6**

*Friends love through all kinds of weather,  
and families stick together in all kinds of trouble. (MSG)*

*One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin,  
but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.*

*Wounds\* from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.*

- Pastor Mark shared some statistics about the “epidemic of loneliness” that sociologists have identified is gripping much of the Western world. We seem to be witnessing that a “go-it-alone” mentality is preferred. It can seem to be easier to just get through life on your own. The writer of Proverbs left some very helpful words to the contrary. What do each of these verses mean to you? (\*wounds can indicate words or actions of correction)
- *Pray for friends who stick “closer than a brother”.*

## **THURSDAY: 1 THESSALONIANS 5.10-11**

*He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. <sup>11</sup> Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*

- When we put all of our striving and achievements in the context of living together with Jesus, we have all the motivation we need to put our friends before ourselves and to work to build each other up. This kind of life and relationship is an outflow of God ‘s generosity to us. Do you make encouragement and the building up of others a regular part of your life?
- *Pray that God will equip you to be an encourager and one who lifts up others to Jesus.*

## FRIDAY: ROMANS 12.9-10

*Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.<sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.*

- Not everyone we meet can be a spiritual friend. We don't have the capacity for that! But we are called to love others with a sincere love, to hate what is evil and to cling to what is good. How can you improve at showing sincere love to strangers? What practices help you honor others above yourself?
- *Identify those whom you have the hardest time honoring above yourself. Pray a humble prayer for them.*

## SATURDAY: PSALM 133

*How good and pleasant it is  
when God's people live together in unity!*

<sup>2</sup>*It is like precious oil poured on the head,  
running down on the beard,  
running down on Aaron's beard,  
down on the collar of his robe.*

<sup>3</sup>*It is as if the dew of Hermon  
were falling on Mount Zion.*

*For there the Lord bestows his blessing,  
even life forevermore.*

- The goodness of unity among God's people is described as a generous pouring of oil over the head of Aaron. This act is described in Leviticus 8.12 when Aaron was anointed as priest. Picture the oil covering every pore. Unity and spiritual friendship is like a coating of protection and a mark of blessing for the world to see. How does a lack of unity among believers impact the witness of the church? When do the people of God seem to shine the most?
- *Pray for a deepening of spiritual friendship in your own life and in the life of the church.*

## **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION**

Pastor Mark shared the following quote from a 12th century monk named Aelred of Rievaulx. He said, “What happiness, what security, what joy to have someone to whom you dare to speak on terms of equality as to another self; one to whom you need have no fear to confess your failings; one to whom you can unblushingly make known what progress you have made in the spiritual life; one to whom you can entrust all the secrets of your heart and before whom you can place all your plans!”

Who comes to mind as you read this description of spiritual friendship? Who do you confess to? Who helps you to grow in your relationship with Jesus? Who could potentially fill these roles.